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HEREDITARY BONDSMEN;

OR,

IS IT ALL IN VAIN?

HEREDITARY BONDSMEN;

OR,

IS IT ALL IN VAIN?

BY

J. DE LIEFDE.

Hereditary Bondsmen ! know ye not
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow ?
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought ?

CHILDE HAROLD. *Canto II.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

London :

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

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HEREDITARY BONDSMEN ;

OR,

IS IT ALL IN VAIN ?

CHAPTER I.

THE CHIEF OBSTRUCTOR OF THE NATION.

THE EARL OF BURGOS was one of the few favoured mortals who enjoy the privilege of living in London without neighbours. His residence—Castile House—was a noble building, standing in its own ground, and looking upon the finest and most fashionable portion of the Park. When the young Earl came into possession, it was flanked on both sides by inferior houses, which had long been an eyesore to him. He had not the patience to wait until the leases fell in. The occupants were bought out at a great price, the tenements pulled down, and a handsome carriage approach was constructed ; and after he had planted a dense shrubbery on both

sides, the Earl surrounded the whole with a massive iron railing, so as to make his home as much of a castle as the spirit of the age would allow.

The front and sides being thus finished, he began an attack upon the houses at the back. There was a row of six, and the leases had just been renewed. Four of them were procured after some negotiation, but the remaining two, which had been taken by an eccentric personage, could not be had at any price. It was rumoured that the Earl had offered him three times the value of his lease, but had been refused. After much vain striving, the nobleman had abandoned his project; but a few months later he discovered that the tenant, who had erected a conservatory in his garden, had failed to obtain the special permission for building which the law required. The Earl, who was at that time adding a suite of private apartments to the back of his right wing, somewhat maliciously gave orders to have the new building prolonged so as to brick up the obstinate tenant's conservatory. And when Mr. McTag, the tenant, threatened to go to law, the Earl laughed at him.

The mansion itself was a noble structure. It was decorated with the massive and sombre splendour which in England often takes the place of elegance and taste. Whatever lightness there had

been in it, had gone. The gloom of the state apartments, which comprised the entire centre of the block, was almost overpowering. The state apartments, therefore, were kept for state occasions, when gloom was indispensable. The Countess had, during her husband's life, occupied the left wing, but it was only during the last month that the furniture had been again uncovered, after having been left to darkness for years. It had scarcely lost its chill, and although very handsome, was of a somewhat severe and antiquated character, well suited to the stately woman who had returned thither from her retirement.

The Earl's apartments in the right wing were of a very different description. The young bachelor had not thought it beneath him to spend much reflection upon the embellishment of his abode. He had seen all that London, Paris, or Vienna, could produce of elegance; he had engaged artists to plan; he had picked others to decorate for him; and all who enjoyed his hospitality confessed that it was simply unmatched.

The only fault that could perhaps be found with his taste was that it betrayed a leaning towards sensuality—of a very refined character, it is true, and always decorous; but this taste was so persistently carried out into the smallest details as to indicate to a reader of character the strong undercurrent of a powerful mind. The paintings

by masters in the art of not-adorning, the panels in the walls and ceiling, the tinted statues surrounded with flowers, chairs and ottomans too easy for sitting, carpets that fettered the most elastic step—all were illuminated by a soft light, that tempted guests to indolent repose amidst such Sybaritic luxury. But if this was the voluptuous splendour of the apartments where the Earl welcomed his friends, very different was the style of the rooms where he entertained his projects.

The last of the brilliant suite was a smoking and billiard room, panelled with oak. One of the panels was made to slide back; and through the opening it was possible to enter into another suite, furnished throughout with the most Catonian simplicity. Not a superfluous sound was heard in these rooms from day to day. Few persons were admitted—the Countess never entered them. The doors locked from the inside, and they were closed to all the servants, with the exception of one confidential valet who had learned that silence was golden. The walls were thick, the windows double; the one luxury was a carpet on the floor, that drowned every noise. It was there that the Earl spent half his day, surrounded by his books and papers.

Although the world was no wiser, Mr. McTag, the obstinate tenant, had so far relented as to relinquish one of his houses to the Earl's use.

It was occupied by half a dozen gentlemen, who were versed in many a science, and in nearly every language, whose business it was to chronicle every event that happened in the political world, and much that happened out of it. It was their duty so to arrange every word or deed which was published, that they could refer to it in a moment. They were presided over by a chief recorder—a man of much sagacity and political information, who alone was permitted to communicate with his chief. As long as he produced what was required, and answered what was asked, he was allowed *carte blanche*, and he took care to maintain his position. The machinery worked smoothly, and often with terrible precision. It was one of the means by which the most keen-witted man of his time recorded and hoarded the superstitions and prejudices of the nation; and caressed and petted with unabated zeal the great national ogre—Vested Interest.

It was known that the Earl of Burgos was the most ambitious of men, yet he had never held office. He had frequently declined places that would not only have satisfied but flattered a rising politician. He had never had any official experience; he was not known to keep up any official connections; yet he was sometimes better informed than even Ministers. He had begun at twenty-one by refusing favours; he had ended at thirty by demanding them. His secret lay in this, that he

had made a deep study of intrigue, and had assiduously cultivated a natural genius for circumvention. He had his agent at every court. By the judicious use of influence, he had become known as a man whom it was very profitable to please; and not a few there were who had found him a man whom it was necessary to serve.

It was darkly rumoured in clubs that he used his vast wealth to obtain power over those whom he desired to utilize. Many an involved attaché—perhaps, occasionally, a rash and extravagant Secretary of Legation—had been treated by usurers or agents with a leniency that was inexplicable; and, without being able to account for the strange coincidence, they had generally found that a show of independence towards one quarter produced an inconvenient turn of the screw from the other. The thousands who had followed the Earl's public career, and who knew that he spoke but seldom, were fairly puzzled at the extraordinary prestige he had managed to gain. The few who had followed his private life were something more than puzzled, they were grieved.

There were only two persons in the world who had sufficient assurance to remonstrate with him; the one was his mother, the other a strange creature whom he tolerated about him as familiar, and who was not known to anyone but himself. The

Countess had found his public life at all times consistent, his speeches powerful, and his acts judicious ; but, as a mother, she had heard things of him that had made her pause with alarm. What she had heard was vague, nor could the evidence be possibly adduced, but rumours were so persistent, and ran so continually in the same groove, that she could only hope they were devoid of foundation. She had, more than once, been urged to speak to him ; she had told him all she had heard ; she had implored him to reassure her that it was not true, but he had remained silent. And when she warned him that he walked a fatal road, and that he could never be great as a statesman, if he were despicable in private, he had answered with some of the levity of the second Charles, that his acts were his own, but his politics those of his family.

Yet it cannot be doubted that his early training had begun by corrupting him. The politics of the Burgos family had remained unchanged for centuries. They somewhat resembled the huge sandbanks that are formed at the mouths of great rivers. By some currents they are shifted toward the shore, by others they are carried farther out to sea, but on the whole they maintain their obstructive position ; at once a discouragement to trade, a bar to development, and a barrier to invasion. It had been the policy of the family so to educate the rising generation, that, whoever

might be ultimately called to the title, should be fully worthy of occupying the proud and hereditary position of Chief Obstructor of the Nation.

The late Lord Burgos had been so trained, and after some kicking, had submitted. The present Lord had been so trained, and had kicked very hard, without for some time showing signs of submission. Indeed, the young heir had shown signs of furious Radicalism, and had laughed at the admonitions of his tutor. He had made a speech to the boys at the public school where he was educated, that had so fearfully alarmed his father, as to induce him to send his son to a Jesuit College with a Protestant name, as the only means of saving him. This had produced one of the desired results. Lord John Herron had returned silent in speech, subdued apparently in spirits, and a warm admirer of Machiavelli. His father was at first afraid that the pluck had been taken out of him, but he soon found that his teachers had instilled into him a boundless ambition, had developed an extraordinary energy and a determination to hesitate at nothing.

What else he found out, was not easy to say. After Lord John took his seat for Burgos in the Commons, his career was sufficiently brilliant to raise his father's hopes to the highest pitch. The stories which the old Earl heard about his son's private life were of that kind which do not trouble

fathers much ; and if he had been anxious he could not have interfered, unless his heir had made himself conspicuous—and of this there was no fear. But ere the old Earl died, and was gathered to the other crumbling remnants of the family, he had become convinced of this, that if his heir failed in obstructing the nation, it would be neither from too little talent nor from too much scruple.

At the time that Lord Burgos took his seat in the Upper House, he was enveloped in a cloud of mystery. He had a large number of acquaintances, but not one friend. There were many men with whom he bartered secrets, but not one with whom he exchanged confidences. He came and went no one knew whence or whither. He had learned from the great enemy of *l'Infame* that most infamous doctrine, that speech was made to hide thought ; although he was a born orator, and had carefully cultivated a most glorious talent, his speeches were read with admiration but also with disappointment. They were the productions of a commanding intellect, but devoid of sympathy ; they were bitter to enemies, and flattering to allies ; but friends and foes alike were glad when he left the House of Commons, and there were not many in another place who welcomed him with cordiality.


It has been said that his mother alone had ventured to remonstrate with him. The stately

Countess saw her son but seldom, for he was so wrapped up in his occupations that he could scarcely find time to run down to Herron Hall. Nor was he always in the mood to be spoken to. He could be so impatient at any attempt at interference, and even to her sometimes so haughty, that she thought it wiser to remain silent. Yet there were moments, though they came but seldom, when he acted like a most affectionate son. He would then take a low chair at her feet, and by his manner remind her of the days when she could look into his eyes and find them guileless. But the mood soon passed, and a darker influence seemed to regain its hold upon him.

What hopes had she not fostered for her only child? What tears had she not wept over him? What anxious nights had she not watched at his bedside? And now what had become of him? She was too proud to say much, or waste many words. After her husband's death, she had tried to induce him to marry, and had, much against her inclination, kept up the house with some of its former splendour, solely for that purpose. But when she became wearied, and pressed him to make a choice, he had replied, with a strange laugh, that he had the reputation of being a rake and an infidel, and that he was not in the marrying mood.

Upon this the Countess had retired to Herron

Hall, but had extracted from him the promise that he would make no final choice without consulting her. There was not much fear of his repenting, for he frankly confessed that he had only seen one woman who would not sink into insignificance by the side of his mother. That one, however, whom both admired, seemed to possess every requisite qualification—except consent. Lord Burgos knew very well that Eugenie Fairfax was a great prize—and he was accustomed to gain great prizes—but he felt instinctively that if he won her, it must be by means which he had seldom employed, and which he felt to be going beyond his grasp. Was it not better to spur onward in the course he was going, and which must lead him to the consummation of his hopes? Would even Eugenie Fairfax refuse to become *Duchess* of Burgos?



CHAPTER II.

THE OBSTINATE TENANT.

THE recess was now over. Parliament had re-assembled, and the nation watched, with increasing anxiety, the issue of the debate on the repeal of the obnoxious Labour Laws. The political air of the nation began to wear each day a more threatening aspect; the disturbances in the country districts were more serious and more frequent; the strikes in the centres of industry were more prolonged, the men often assumed a tone of hostility and resentment, for it had begun to be whispered that whatever the House of Commons might do, the House of Lords was determined, at all risks, to reject the Bill. London was still tranquil, and business ran smoothly in its accustomed grooves. But it was no longer a secret that a great demonstration was being quietly arranged, and that the serenity of the metropolis would ere long be disturbed.

Lord Burgos was seated one morning before a writing-table in his private library; his brow was pensive and clouded; he glanced over his letters, and ran through a number of papers, jotting down a few memoranda on a small tablet by his side. When he had finished he touched the button of an electric bell on his table. There was an immediate though scarcely audible answer in a corner of the room. The Earl again touched the bell, and, rising, went to the massive bookcase that filled the entire back-wall of the new suite of apartments, took out a volume and withdrew an invisible bolt. Presently a part of the bookcase opened noiselessly, and the florid head of Mr. McTag, otherwise Mr. Tagson, made its appearance. He carefully closed the opening through which he had come, and stood silently before the Earl, who had resumed his seat.

"You can sit down," said the latter, curtly, while looking through some papers. "What news is there?"

"Nothing much to speak of," answered Mr. McTag, carefully. "I was at Genthorpe yesterday."

"Were there many people," asked Lord Burgos, "any of my friends—Lord Ryan or so?"

"I did not see Lord Ryan himself, but his agent was there, who made some bidding for the estate. But Clarkson bought it, according to your instruc-

tions, a good deal under the maximum, and he awaits further orders."

"Did anybody know that Clarkson was buying for me?" asked Lord Burgos.

"I don't see how anybody could. Mr. Clarkson buys for everybody; but Mr. Sutton was very eager to find out."

"Why should he be anxious? It surely can make no difference to him."

"Well, my lord, he is a curious man. He seems to have spent his life in that place, if permitted, remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow; and I doubt very much whether he would care to remain there if it came into any new man's possession."

"What have you been able to find out about him?"

"I should say he is a most respectable man—a gentleman who could be, if permitted, strong without rage; and a man who has saved some money."

"I suppose he has," said the Earl carelessly. "He is childless and has no relations, I believe?"

"None that he acknowledges, at any rate," said Mr. McTag. "I'm told he has saved a lot of money, and only looks after Genthorpe because it is his hobby. But he has taken a furnished house in London, and is looking about."

"Very good, keep an eye on him. What about the statues?"

"A few things were bought by Lord Ryan,

the rest by Mr. Mason, and everything remains there for the present."

"Ah, yes. As to this Mason business," said the Earl; "do you think it worth while keeping that on?"

"Decidedly. The business is first class, and only encumbered in consequence of rash speculations. The man is fearfully involved, and, if permitted, drags at each remove a lengthening chain. If he is allowed to weather the storm, and is kept to business, he is bound to come all right."

"Then at present, as I understand, the business is carried on at a loss?"

"Not exactly that, but I hold some very heavy bills that entail a certain risk."

"Then sell him up," said Lord Burgos curtly, drawing a line through the name, "and have done with him."

"I hope you will reconsider your decision, my lord."

"No. I have long been annoyed by the thought of him. Get rid of him."

"Very well," said McTag drily, as who should say, "you'll know better presently."

"As regards that man, Warren Harrick," continued McTag, in a business-like way, "I find that he lives at No. 12, Cherry Gardens, Lambeth, where he has two rooms on the second floor. The

house is rented by a person called George Phidias, commonly known as J. F., a shaky character, who dabbles in anti-free-trade riots, and drinks."

"What name?" asked the nobleman, and hearing it again, wrote it on a slip of paper, and touched another bell. "If he has dabbled in politics, Michael will know something of him." Mr. McTag stepped behind a curtain, a servant entered, took the paper, and disappeared.

"He has lived in this house for some years now, and bears a most exemplary character with the police," said McTag.

"I thought you said he was a shaky character, and drank," said Lord Burgos.

"That is the man Phidias—I was speaking of Harrick. He keeps irregular hours, but has never² been seen drunk, or even elevated, and he has bailed out his landlord more than once. I passed by the house, saw lodgings to let, went in on pretence of looking at them, and managed to see a good deal of the house. I got to Harrick's bed-room, and found that his bed was occupied by our friend Petrel, who played us that trick at Choisy, and who is in hiding for having caused the accident at Thamestone. How he came down there I do not know."

"That's very strange," said the Earl, pensively. "I wonder whether Harrick had any hand in that affair."

At that moment another bell rang, Mr. McTag again stepped behind the curtain, the Earl touched his bell in reply, and the servant entered, handed him the same slip, and retired in silence. Lord Burgos read—

“George Phidias, born in Manchester, April 1, 18—; thus 60 years old. Married, May 15, '46, to Mary, daughter of Jos. Sutton, of Manchester. Elected Town Councillor in Nov. '46. Agitates against Free Trade. Son born, June 3, 1847; dies, Aug. 25, 1848. Bill of Sale on Furniture, 1851; and on Machinery of Silk Factory, 1853. Daughter born, Jan. 10, 1855. Drunk and disorderly before Manchester Police Court, Sept. 17, 1856; fined 20s., or a week; paid. The same, Jan. 8, 1857; fined 40s., or a fortnight; paid. Bankrupt, Jan. 3, 1858. Sale of Factory, Stock, and Household Furniture. Dividend, 3s. in the pound. Creditors paid in full by brother-in-law, Launcelot Sutton, Esq., of Genthorpe, Thamesshire. Apprehended in so-called Anti-Free-Trade Riot, March 15, 1859. Gives occupation as commercial traveller. Fined £5; paid. Apprehended at Lyons, July 21, 1865, in Republican riot. Then clerk in the employ of Smith and Son, silk weavers. Fined 50 francs; paid.”

“This man is a bad lot, and married to Sutton’s sister, of all people. No wonder he does not acknowledge her,” said the Earl, fixing his eyes on McTag, who had resumed his seat.

"He has a weakness for whisky," said that gentleman, "and is incapable of being, if permitted, without overflowing, full."

"And with this disreputable character Harrick associates?"

"He lives there, I believe, for the sake of the wife, who is hard-working and under-fed, and the daughter, who is good-looking."

"H'm! that's better. You must get a footing in that house."

"I have provisionally engaged the rooms that were to let; but it is scarcely necessary, as Harrick is employed by Mason."

"By Mason! the deuce he is!" said the Earl quickly; "why did you not tell me that before? That is most important."

"Mason has got him, under a contract, for another three years, at the modest sum of £3 a week, and he has been so unwise as to keep down his genius by every means."

"Has he got genius? Who tells you so? What do you know about it?"

"I'm told that he is a most promising young carver, and he is very popular among the workmen."

"Under those circumstances," said the Earl, after a moment's consideration, "you must leave Mason undisturbed. This is a very odd coincidence. You are evidently on a trail. What about this Petrel?"

"I know nothing, absolutely nothing, about him at present, except that he is there, and very ill."

"McTag, you must throw yourself, heart and soul, into this business of Katherine's. You have been, for the last six months, baffled by a woman."

"I don't consider that a disgrace, sir. If permitted, they're deep and clear; though gentle, never dull."

"I am almost inclined to believe, McTag," said the Earl, "that you have lost some of your sharpness."

"Pardon me, sir," said the jolly farmer, getting a tinge more florid, "it was you who ordered me to stop the pursuit."

"I did," said the Earl, "I won't deny that. I stopped the pursuit; but the longing has grown upon me irresistibly. I must see her again."

There was an audible sigh at these words that came from a dark portion of the room, where the Earl's familiar was quietly at work. He moved uneasily.

"You traced her to Dr. Plumper's, at Beecham. You must return there, and take up the thread."

"He followed the trail of blood that led out of the wolf's lair, and is the hound ordered to return to the wounded lamb?" whispered a low voice from the dark portion of the room.

"Very well, sir," said McTag. "I shall take up the thread. If permitted, my heart, untravelled, fondly turns to her."

"Has she not been troubled enough, and per-

secuted with sorrow?" said the other occupant of the library.

"It is now nearly three years since she disappeared," said Lord Burgos, speaking with determination, as though he would not listen to the sombre and warning tones. "You lost her at Beecham, and all inquiries were fruitless?"

"That is it, my lord. I searched everywhere, and, if the girl has been there, she has not been seen by anybody except the old Doctor, and his old servant, and little Maud. None of the constables know anything of the matter."

"You must go there again," said the Earl sombrously.

"Can you so forget what is due to yourself, and to God?" said the strange and invisible being. "Think of your mother's honour!"

"Go down there again," said the Earl, grinding his teeth; "and if you return without knowledge of her——"

"John, you debase yourself in the eyes of the villain that stands before you," said the familiar.

"If you fail to trace her," continued the nobleman, clenching his fist, "you will fail in your chief occupation."

"Your lordship evidently thinks that it is impossible for anybody to disappear without leaving a trace."

"It should be, McTag. The whole world is a witness. You have your instructions."

"For Heaven's sake, do not let him go thus!" said the voice. "You know the man will do some evil at your bidding."

"What do you stand there for?" asked the nobleman, angrily, looking at his agent.

"I beg your lordship's pardon, but you seemed to hesitate. I thought perhaps——"

"Oh, think over it again!" pleaded the voice. "Remember that you have not many good acts to boast of, and that your hair will soon be turning grey. Rescind the order. Tell him to abstain from that vile persecution."

"What on earth are you standing there for?" cried the nobleman through his clenched teeth. "You have your orders."

"Recall them, Burgos! for God's sake recall them!" besought the unseen.

"Then get out of my room, and don't return until you have something worth telling."

McTag, who was evidently accustomed to these scenes, and who did not seem to hear the plaintive voice which so disturbed his master, made a short bow and retired.

As soon as he knew himself alone, the Earl rose as in terror.

"Again, that voice!" he cried. "Where is it? Do my senses deceive me—or if not—where art thou, Familiar Spirit, Man or Fiend! Come here!"

There he stood—John Herron, Earl of Burgos, Baron Castille, Hereditary Lord of Coalisle, a peer of the realm, and a member of Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council, with parted lips, and pale countenance, looking fixedly towards the dark part of his study; and it seemed to him that the earth was swaying under him; that the firmament was rocking over his head; that his brain was heaving within its bony casing. His features assumed a dark and troubled expression. He clutched the couch by which he stood, staggered and sank on the cushions. Then came a brief unconsciousness. Let us draw a veil over him as he lay there struck down, helpless, and unmanned.

The hereditary disease, which manifested itself so suddenly, was a secret from the world. It had as yet attacked him but seldom, but the terror of it had held him in bondage from boyhood, had tinged his life, and made him shun the affection of kindred and friends. Wearily he had courted power—for he must fill his heart with something. Ah! what was there left for him but power, if love and affection were impossible? A lonely man, frightened of the world, he had turned from the friendship of mankind as a fugitive, and clung to ambition. With malicious pleasure he used wealth and craft to gain his objects, determined that if he should be the last of his noble line, the sun of his house should set with splendour.

But did that suffice him for life? The marvellous power of his intellect might be satisfied by the political influence he had obtained; but that could not gratify the yearning for fellowship, love and affection which sway all minds. His iron will might crush them, his ambition might sweep them aside; but sometimes his passion would burst the sluice-gates, and the torrent set free would rack every fibre of his brain.

It was then that he would feel the mysterious warnings of this dread disease. Delusive voices, heard by his ear alone, sounded like the stern admonishing from Heaven; and he would shrink from passion and love, knowing that passion meant disease, and disease detection—detection that John Herron, Earl of Burgos, suffered from an affliction so terrible that even in ancient times it was acknowledged with awe as the punishment which the gods inflicted upon those who were offenders against their majesty.

His passion for Katherine had slowly gathered strength. He had fought bravely against his folly; but he had surrendered at last, and the punishment had come before the passion was satisfied. The fit was fortunately but short, and the Earl soon passed into that lethargic condition, half-swoon, half-sleep, which usually follows an epileptic seizure. His brain was busily at work, and it appeared to him as if the same voice again addressed him.

"Slave!" it cried, in a hoarse whisper, that sounded through the room, "miserable, faithless bondsman. It were better had you not been born—it were better if the just hand of Heaven had crushed you beneath your mother's heart, than that you should live as you live now."

"As I live now?" murmured the Earl, with his eyes still closed. "I live as I have always lived."

"Ay! as you have always lived," continued the voice. "But you have grown a thousand times worse. I never said you were good. I never expected you could be—but I hoped you would not get worse. But you have, miserable faithless slave!"

"I am not worse," returned the Earl, still in the same position. "This is an old passion of mine, which I can't shake off, and must cling to as my only means of salvation."

It now seemed to the prostrate wretch as if a form with flaming eyes stood over him, and shook him roughly.

"Liar!" hissed the voice. "It is not a question of salvation with you. It is one of gratified pride, and nothing else. You know how good and pure she is. You know that her marriage is valid to all intents and purposes, and that you could not marry her if you would. What do you want?"

"Make her love me as I love her. I do love her, better than anything else in the world."

"She can never be yours, until her husband is dead; and that, you know, he is not. Recall that villain, McTag, and leave her."

The severity of the attack seemed to pass off, the miserable sufferer leaned wearily on one side, a heavy sigh escaped him, and his face assumed a melancholy expression; the voice continued as in pleading tones.

"There are many years of iniquity that you have to atone for. The debt you already owe to this girl alone is not easily wiped out or redeemed. How good and noble it would be of you, if you exerted yourself for her good instead of her ruin, and made her as happy as lies within your power!"

"And leave her to another, whom she may learn to love! I can't, I can't!" murmured the Earl.

"There is no help for it. You must recall that man, and give him strict orders to abstain, for you are doing the devil's work. I tell you you must—you shall."

The Earl opened his eyes, and looked around. He sat up and held both his hands to his giddy head. "'Twas like a horrible dream," he whispered; "but what a warning! what a warning! I must listen to that, but what to do. Ah!" he cried suddenly, addressing his imaginary counsellor. "I have it! I shall not recall McTag. I can't

do that. But if he finds her out, and if he finds out the husband too, I shall do all in my power to bring them together. Your advice has been good, my friend. She has been sorely troubled."

A bell here rang. Burgos rose, bathed his face in some cool water, and adjusted his disordered clothes. The servant entering, announced that a special messenger from Athens wanted to deliver a packet.

"Show him in," said the Earl coolly.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREEK QUESTION.

THE Earl's face wore its usual impenetrable expression, when the messenger was ushered in. The packet he brought was not very bulky, but a knife had to cut through four envelopes, each with a different seal, before the contents were revealed. They consisted of documents, printed papers, and plans; the writing was in cypher.

"You have not been very long on the road, Jarvis," said Lord Burgos, "when did you leave?"

"I left Athens on Saturday, and, if I am not mistaken, it's Friday morning now, my lord."

"You have done over two thousand miles in a hundred and thirty hours. That's not bad. But you look tired and want rest. There will be no answer for at least three days. Here is a five-pound note for you. Mr. Michael will pay you your regular bill."

The Earl hastily glanced through the papers, and a gleam of satisfaction shot across his face. He

summoned his servant impatiently, and ordered him to take them upstairs and have them deciphered immediately.

“Mr. Charles Overdon is waiting in the small drawing-room, and particularly requests a few moments.”

Lord Burgos frowned and looked annoyed, but gave the nod which the servant so well understood. He sat in his chair for some moments, wrapped in deep thought, and by the motion of his fingers it was evident that he was making a calculation of probable results; then rising, he passed rapidly through his private apartments, slid back the panel, and advanced with silent step towards the small drawing-room where the Radical member awaited him. The rooms were divided by heavy curtains, through which the Earl advanced without being heard. When he had arrived at the drawing-room, he could see the lawyer standing in front of an exquisite copy of Thorwaldsen's Venus, and admiring its chaste beauty with an amount of attention that might have displeased the former Miss Voyson. The Earl contemplated the lawyer for a moment, as if surveying his ground, and then suddenly stood by his side, and put his hand on Overdon's shoulder. The lawyer was accustomed to what he called Burgos's dodges, and seemed in no degree startled. He greeted him with his usual joviality.

"I say, Burgos," said he, "if I had not seen the original in Stockholm, I would have thought this was it."

"Perhaps you should not be so far wrong," said the Earl, smiling.

"It is surprisingly like the original. At least, what the authorities at Stockholm call the original."

"They are so much alike," said Lord Burgos, "that I believe Thorwaldsen himself did not know the difference."

"Do you mean to say that it was made by him?"

"It was the only copy which he consented to make of his masterpiece. And if it were not a copy it would be a great original."

"Strange, is it not," said Overdon, gently turning the figure on its pedestal, "that so much beauty could exist in so dull a mind?"

"I don't know," said Burgos. "Not stranger than to find, as we often do, a still duller mind in so much beauty. I dare say Venus herself was excessively dull."

"She must have been exceedingly vain, at least," said Overdon, with a smile. "But this Thorwaldsen, when I knew him in Rome, was just in the midst of his foolish and incomprehensible infatuation for his mistress. I thought her a complete stick, you know."

"It is a blessing that these great artists are generally so foolish in other matters," said the Earl.

"I acknowledge the fact," said Overdon, "but I do not see the blessing."

"Why, if they were not fools they would be nuisances."

"My dear Burgos, this world is filled with nuisances; would a few more or less make any difference?"

"Yes, decidedly," said the Earl; "because they would be not only annoying, but dangerous. These men, you must remember, generally rise from the ranks; and if not weighed down by dulness, become too buoyant, and in fact go over to turbulence."

"For the development of the human race, turbulence is often useful," said Overdon, sententiously.

"I know that is your opinion," said Burgos, turning upon him suddenly. "That's why you encourage that man Harrick."

"I should very much like to," said Overdon, meeting his gaze, "and shall if I get a chance."

"Overdon, be careful. You take a pride in assuming an extreme position. Do you think that distinction is more easily gained at the flanks than in leading the main body?"

"I don't know that distinction is to be gained anywhere," said Overdon.

"Then what reason can you have for being so persistently obnoxious?"

"Oh, come, it's rather too late for me to make a political confession. There surely must be somebody in every country who is ready to sweep away what is not immoveably fixed. As regards this Harrick, it is about him I call."

"Call about Harrick? What do you mean?"

"I mean that at Lord Ryan's request I invite you to come to his house next Saturday, to meet Mr. Warren Harrick."

"To meet Mr. Warren Harrick?" repeated Lord Burgos, with a puzzled smile.

"Yes," said Overdon. "You don't think it physically impossible to meet a working-man, do you?"

"I wait until you are pleased to explain," said the Earl, sinking into a chair.

"That is not difficult," said the lawyer, following his example. "My brother thinks, and so do I, that the time has not yet gone by when this demonstration and the consequent disturbances can be avoided. There is, we believe, a large party among the working-men who would gladly accept a compromise; and it is Lord Ryan's desire to have a conference with the two most prominent and most reasonable men among them, Warren Harrick and Kennedy. They have promised to meet him next Saturday; and if you come we may enter into some arrangement."

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"Who else is to be present at this meeting?" asked Lord Burgos pensively.

"There will be Sir Richard Steele, and Mr. Payne, and Maurice, the Chairman of the United Empire Railway Company, and perhaps Lord Daintry. He opposes you in the house, but a coalition between yourself, him, and Ryan, would I think be strong enough to carry a compromise."

"And where is this conference to come off?" asked the Earl.

"At Rufus Square. I proposed some other locality when I heard of it, but Eugenie, Mrs. Fairfax, who seems very much interested in the question, insisted on its being there. She hopes you will be present."

"I am afraid that my engagements will prevent me accepting this flattering invitation," said the Earl.

"Oh, but you must come. Can we fight our battle without Achilles? I promised to bring you."

"Promised? To whom did you give anything so rash?"

"To—to Lord Ryan of course. And to tell you the truth, I promised it to myself."

"Well, if I come," said the Earl, "it will be to please Lord Ryan and you. But I must ask you to perform for me a return service, which will not, perhaps, be unwelcome."

"Fire away. Out with it," said Overdon.

"You know that to-night the Greek affair is coming on in the House?"

"Yes, rather. I have a question on the paper about it."

"Good. The foreign office has received despatches that Appolonius, the Greek minister, has accepted the ultimatum. Our squadron is to be immediately recalled, and a new man sent out, as usual, to smooth matters over. Now I shall put a copy of correspondence into your hands, showing that he has outwitted us, and virtually continues the same conduct as before. He is playing false right and left, and Constantinople is watching him."

"And you can give me correspondence that is not known to Lestrangle?"

"I will give you secret correspondence, plans and maps and all, that won't be in their hands for a week."

"By Jove you will! I'll give Lestrangle a roasting. I must go home and get the question up a little."

"You need not do that," said the Earl. "At half-past three a copy of every document, and an abstract history of the entire case, will be in your hands this afternoon. The question won't come on till after tea. Let them have it hot. Get a few men behind you who'll speak; you have been there

and know how the land lies. You will be beaten on division if you insist on it, but it will bring them to their senses. Are you willing?"

"Willing!" cried Overdon, "I'll catch the speaker's eye if he is fast asleep."

"One condition, of course," said Burgos. "Absolutely mum."

"Of course. But I say, now that I come to think of it, it's strange that you should look after this, of all people."

"Not perhaps so strange as you think. Good-bye. If possible I shall be there on Monday, about one, I suppose?"

In the afternoon, while the Earl was riding in the park, he joined a group of men who had drawn up under the trees.

"Behold our modern prophet!" said Mr. Florryne, who had not yet forgotten their tiff at Lord Ryan's. "I look in vain for camel's-hair and locusts. Have you betaken yourself to the wilderness yet?"

"No, this is beginning to look more like a park," said the Earl, drily. "This may in time look pretty."

"And what about your fearful and gigantic demonstrations? May they in time look smaller?"

"Oh, thou unbelieving one!" said Lord Burgos, laughing. "Verily, I say unto thee, the time is nigh when you shall know the truth of my words."

Take care. I tell you the very East is rising up against you."

That night, when cabs were flying about the town to call members together for a division, Mr. Florrynne remembered the warning and shook his head over it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE HOUSEKEEPER.

THE relations between Mr. Mason and Monsieur Ververt were of a peculiar character. It could not be said that either of them was in the least degree popular with the men; yet their characters were as dissimilar as could well be conceived. Hallelujah Mason seemed so oppressed by the weight of former generations, that he was absolutely unable to rise to his own. He scarcely realized what was going on in the world around him. Like his father and grandfather, he spoke no foreign language; and although he could make himself tolerably well understood in his native tongue, he very seldom took the trouble.

Ververt, the grizzly, on the other hand, spoke half-a-dozen languages, had lived in a dozen capitals, and had endeavoured nearly all his life to cut himself off from the past, and, if possible, from the present, and to exist in a dreamy future of his own. He had been in Mason's employ, off

and on, for many years, and having become too old to travel, had become foreman at the yard in Lambeth. There was a sort of sulky confidence between the two men. Both knew very well that Mason was hopelessly involved, and in the power of some mighty man; and although there was not much discussion between them, there were times when Ververt could pounce upon his master, metaphorically beat him black and blue, and cram an amount of bitter but wholesome physic into him, that Mason would otherwise have resolutely refused.

Ververt had for some years been left pretty much to do as he liked in the yard. Mason had never possessed sufficient genius to estimate the correctness of technical details, and he confined himself, with an ancient clerk, to the commercial part of the business. Ververt, on the other hand, abhorred writing, but had a keen eye for the quality of work, and he could determine to a shilling what a man was worth, and up to what point he could be trusted. He lived in a room on the second story of the gloomy building, where, like an old gipsy as he was, he had, amidst the casts and models, made himself a sort of tent, and surrounded himself with the trophies of his life and several dozen pipes. Here he had hitherto been attended by the only other occupant of the house, Biddy Malone. She was not altogether to

his liking, but with cynical tyranny he had persisted in keeping her in defiance of the men, saying that if they got a better housekeeper she would only spoil them.

Biddy had good reason to know that in the entire establishment the old Frenchman was her only ally, and with the instinct of self-preservation, she had taken care to attend to his wants, however she might neglect the men. His room was, perhaps, not over clean, his food was not always perfection; what little linen he wore was not always spotless; but there was one thing that Biddy could do. She could make a good cup of *café au lait*; and as long as she brought him that in the morning, he rather enjoyed her continual warfare, and did not discourage her bickerings with the men. But a day came in the history of his life when he found matters taken out of his hand.

Baptiste Ververt had been intimately acquainted with ever so many barricades, and had been a member of at least one provisional Government, but at the age of threescore he was still profoundly sceptical of the power of co-operation. When Harrick told him that Biddy was going, he laughed and shrugged his shoulders, and mentioned Mr. Mason, though he knew very well that Biddy would not go unless he himself dismissed her. He was amazed, however, to find that from that moment

a total and unaccountable change had come over the Irish widow. Not in all the time that she had been in the house had she done so much scrubbing as she now managed to perform within the compass of a day. She seemed violently desirous of performing a certain task; and most marvellous of all, the only thing that she had hitherto done well, *café au lait*, she neglected.

The first morning Monsieur Ververt remonstrated, but without effect. The second morning he swore mildly, and Biddy swore back, but not mildly. The third morning Monsieur Ververt devoutly wished to be, for a few days, president of a republic, that he might have Biddy locked up and shot; but when he gave utterance to some such thought, Biddy informed him that he was a "dhirty vagabone," and that he could go to "blazes." Then it struck Monsieur Ververt, suddenly, that the woman wanted more money, and had taken this way of intimating her desire. Biddy's wages amounted to the modest sum of two shillings and sixpence a week, and Ververt hinted at three shillings. He even held out a distant prospect of three and sixpence, but the widow Malone with indignation and a fearful brogue inquired whether "be jabers he was afther insulting a woman. That if he couldn't be prisidint of a republic, her son could; that she was going off to him, and that five shillings would not tempt her,

nor seven and sixpence." Baptiste Ververt came to the conclusion that the woman was going crazy, and that the sooner they got rid of her the better.

Harrick had foreseen this, and feeling that his time had come, said in a simple sort of way,

"Well, Ververt, have you by this time made up your mind to let Biddy go?"

"Make up my mind? why then should I make up my mind?"

"That's pretty plain, I should say. Because she is bad and ill-tempered and stupid."

"Bah!" said the smoking cynic. "All women are that; but *certainement* she is highly gifted in that quarter."

"Then why did you take her at all, or not dismiss her long ago?"

"Young man," said Ververt, laying down his tools and knocking the ashes out of his little clay pipe. "You are an *individu* of much *théorie* and very little practice. You have had no experience in the management of men. I have. After many many years of it, I come here and I engage a woman that was ugly-*bien*, that was good, but she could not stay. Then I took one that was ugly and ill-temper-*bien*, that was better because men did not what you call tom-fool themselves; but she could not stop. Then I took one that was ugly, and bad-temper and drink-*bien*, that was better still, for she

gave the men what you call a frightful-example, and show them what it was necessary to avoid. But she could not stop. Then at last I am *forcé* to take one woman that is ugly, and bad-temper, and drink and lazy, and that is very excellent, for now the men have *absolument* no temptation to keep away from their work, and *nom de nom* they get angry and discontent, and they turn what you call crusted and rebellious; and now Biddy is beginning to be useless too, and she cannot stop. *Vraiment*, it is too bad. I give it up."

"I should think you would after that," said Harrick, laughing. "You have exhausted very nearly the entire catalogue of vices. Now I tell you what we intend to do; we mean to try all the virtues."

"All the virtues!" cried Ververt, "and that in a woman! *C'est impossible, mon ami.*"

"I admit that it is rare," said Harrick, smiling, "but I mean all the virtues required for a position of this kind."

"And this virtuous *individu*, is she young?"

"This *individu*, as you call her, is, I should say, about twenty years old."

"Then," said Ververt decisively, "she must not come here. She is what you call a little chitty. We will get the kitchen full, and the yard empty, no work done, and all sorts of mischief."

"Not at all," said Harrick. "The *individu* that

I am about to introduce into this establishment shall possess not one of the qualities that your housekeepers have been conspicuous for. I believe in the principle that an officer should be superior to his men. She will be a sort of officer, she is a young lady, the men will be afraid of her, and Monsieur Baptiste Ververt will be the first to call her Mademoiselle."

"*Jamais de la vie*," cried Ververt; "but I understand. You have a young woman that you want to bring here. Aha!"

"Yes, aha!" said Harrick with gravity. "I am only afraid that she may be contaminated."

"Oh, *nom de nom*," laughed Ververt with a sneer, "contaminate. You need not fear that."

"Ververt, if I did not know that beneath that sneer and under that dirty blouse there lies a good and noble heart, I would not dare to bring her here. But when I entrust her to your honour I know that she is safe. Will you give your consent to her trial, say for a month?"

"*Eh bien*," said Ververt, shrugging his shoulders, "let it be for a month. But not longer."

That same evening, after the day's work was done, Harrick assembled the men in the large dining-room, which had become considerably cleaner, and told them in forcible and idiomatic language what he had done.

"Now, my boys," he said, with the good humour

that was one of his chiefest charms, "don't run away with the idea that everything is to be done for you. The great chance to make yourselves permanently comfortable has come, but it won't remain unless you are determined to keep it by hook and crook. Biddy has made you thoroughly uncomfortable, I think ; but I believe the *individu*, as Ververt calls her, that will take her place will spoil you, if anything, and she begins by giving you a chance to be generous. You are all in good wages. I believe none of you earn less than two pounds a week, and I therefore call on you to contribute a preliminary shilling per man to send Biddy away to America. Then the *individu* who assumes her place undertakes to supply you with first-class breakfast, dinner, and supper for one shilling and sixpence a day ; and I think you will find her soups and her rotis as good as anything you can get in Paris for the money. Now there's one condition. This *individu* is a young lady who must not be molested, or troubled, or insulted. Whoever tries that on, out he goes. Some of you are a queer lot, you know. For the expenses of management I propose that you contribute regularly one shilling a week, until we see how things go. And if we find there is a surplus, I propose to rent the little house next door, and make it into smoking and reading-rooms, and have the *Paris Journal*, and the *Kölnische Zeitung* and the *Opinione d'Italia* and

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Charivari and *Punch*, and a small library, if you like, and a bagatelle-board. In fact we'll make ourselves at home there. Only we must look after our own affairs, and see that they are properly managed. Now what do you say?"

The men did not say much, nor did they cheer very lustily, but it was very evident that the plan had already found acceptance. Jean Pierre, who was somewhat of an epicure, and who spent a considerable portion of his wages in endeavouring to procure a dinner that was both toothsome and clean, was delighted with the prospect, and accepted the proposition, adding to it one of his own, that he, Steinman, and Harrick should form themselves into a committee of management to report progress at a meeting to be called that day week. The two proposals were accepted with acclamation; the money, although it was Friday, was immediately forthcoming, and the men went home.

The committee of management forthwith turned to their inspection, and after having carefully examined the domestic part of the house, from the cellar upwards, came to the conclusion that Biddy was not such a bad woman after all, for that she could be clean if she liked. Alas! that she should ever be otherwise! Somewhat incautiously Harrick handed her half the money, telling her that if she wanted to buy a few things for her journey, now was the time. Indeed it was more than her time. Poor

Biddy got leave for some hours and used that opportunity to take a most touching farewell of her favourite Old Tom. She returned in a state of generous humility, and announced to Ververt that "bedad she wodn't be defoilin' the clane place by sleeping in the bed," and so curled herself up in front of the fire.

Thus did the men find her in the early morning. It was nothing unusual to see Biddy lolling about in that condition, to see the fire unlit and nothing ready; and generally there followed some rough horse-play, which had the effect of sobering the handmaiden considerably. On this occasion the men, aggravated by their disappointment at finding things in the old condition, were for giving Biddy a last lesson, which compelled her to fly for safety to the shovel and tongs, in the use of which she had gained considerable experience. By degrees, however, the fire was lit, and some sort of food produced; but the spirit of rebellion was rife, and there reigned a Babel of confusion.

In the midst of this Harrick entered quietly, followed by Lizzie, clad in her plain but neat dress; upon her young and innocent face there were signs of nervousness and tears. She made a slight and timid inclination of the head, which many men acknowledged in silence. They lifted their hats, whispered, and flocked out into the yard. Lizzie, somewhat relieved, took off her bonnet and thin

shawl, turned to the fireplace, and found the Irish woman staring with all her might, and looking nearly double her size. Lizzie quietly ordered her to sweep up the grate and clean the dishes; which order Biddy mechanically obeyed without a word. The breakfast, it need not be said, was seriously delayed, and what there was of it was a failure.

Ververt, who had again missed his morning draught of *café au lait*, presently appeared upon the scene, filled with awful and majestic wrath. Biddy, hearing his approach, had slipped away, and Lizzie was standing with her back to the door when he entered, and commenced in his queer jargon to pour out the vials of his wrath. A timid and shy little face, and a pair of deep brown eyes, that looked up at him with a mixture of fear and laughter, stopped him in full career. Monsieur Ververt muttered a scarcely audible *nom de nom*, and bowed politely; Lizzie returned the bow, and gave him another pretty, half-frightened glance. Monsieur Ververt made a remark about the weather, and Lizzie replied furtively in a low and trembling voice, that completely bowled the grizzled Republican over, and went straight to his queer old heart. With another polite bow, he relinquished his wrath and retired to the studio.

It was not altogether the most encouraging beginning, and poor Lizzie felt several times as though she would gladly have gone home to have a good

cry. But, she had promised Harrick the previous night to be brave. He passed through once or twice in the course of the morning; and when she saw his smile, and when his eyes rested upon her, with their kind expression, she felt that it would be indeed cowardice to give in. Presently there came an ally. Steinman, who was an old *Feldwebel* and a clever cook, as one of the committee, offered his services, which were gladly accepted. The first thing he did was to bundle Biddy off, and send for the charwoman, who had left because she could not agree with Ververt's factotum. Mrs. Broom could not be immediately procured, and under the circumstances the dinner was not the most brilliant, but it was clean, and that afternoon the general opinion among the men was this: the new comer was not much to look at, she seemed rather proud, and above her work, and too much of a child to last long; but she was certainly not worse than Biddy, and the additional shilling was not wasted.

The entire Saturday afternoon, and a portion of the Sunday—be it whispered—was spent by the little housekeeper in studying the place and its capacities, and planning her campaign with Mrs. Broom, who went into the work with heart and soul. She had overcome her first shyness, had stood fire, and was determined to win. Long before sunrise she was at her post with Mrs. Broom, and when the men came in they were

amazed to find everything bright and ready, and the whole house as sweet as a dairy. Monsieur Ververt received a cup of *café au lait* that drove all the Biddies out of his head, and made him pensive with pleasure. Mere curiosity brought him down half an hour earlier, and he could scarcely believe his eyes when he beheld the little housekeeper bustling about, clad in the snowy cap and pinafore of the Lyonnaise girls—which Lizzie had always thought very becoming. The place scarcely seemed the same—the darkest corner looked as light as if somebody had put a new window into it.

The dinner was put upon the table as the clock struck the hour. It was scrupulously clean, and cooked with a simplicity and skill worthy of a professional. Even Harrick shook his head with amazement when he found the bill of fare containing a good soup, boiled beef, carrots, potatoes, bread, and real Italian macaroni. But the men had no such misgivings. They were determined to enjoy the present while it lasted, and when the dinner was over, there was not a scrap of anything left to tell the tale.

Ververt came in, surveyed the scene in silence, and even consented to sit down and eat his dinner, without being able to find a word of remonstrance or criticism. He was content to mutter to himself, and to continue profoundly unconscious of the

presence of anybody else, although that was not usual with him. But when some of the younger men, who had time to spare, collected in a group and lit their pipes, Ververt evidently became uneasy, and began to glare. Presently one young fellow, just arrived from Paris, began the first lines of a ribald song that was in vogue in the head-quarters of the demi-monde. Ververt rose, and his hand was on the singer's neck in a moment. His torrent of angry reproach would have silenced a railway whistle, and when he said "the demoiselle might understand you," drew forth an expression of approval from the rest.

Ververt turned towards Lizzie, and found her blushing.

"Do you understand French?"

"A little, monsieur."

"And you speak it also?"

"I speak it a very little."

"Then, mademoiselle, if you will permit me, we shall always speak it together."

Lizzie blushed still more and laughed with pleasure. Ververt turned away, angry with his own folly, and muttered, "*Nom de nom.*"

CHAPTER V.

KATHERINE'S LETTER.

THREE weeks had elapsed, and the summer warmth was approaching tropical oppression. The British legislator, who, after a hard day's work, turned his weary steps towards the towers of St. Stephens', found no welcome cloud in the sky to veil the glaring sun: and the atmosphere of the Council Chamber became, after a short sitting, almost as impure as that of a court of justice. When, after a hard night's debating, he turned his weary steps homeward, the entire firmament of stars sparkled at him in a hard and dry sort of manner, as if the heat had made even them feverish; and when, in the morning, he turned wearily towards his newspapers, they crackled crisply under his hands, as if they had been dried and scorched by some internal fire. In so far as they were the great arteries of public opinion and the pulses of thought, they were bound to be heated, for public opinion was at fever heat,

and the pulses of the nation throbbed ominously. The Commons had voted the repeal of the Criminal Labour Law by a languid majority. It was now Saturday. On Tuesday the Bill was to be introduced in the Lords, but the Lords had already shown too plainly that they had resolved to reject it.

Lord Ryan was seated in his library, busily engaged in drawing up a series of resolutions, which he intended to submit to the conference arranged for that afternoon. He flattered himself that he had made a considerable step in solving the great problem. If his resolutions were adopted and carried out he felt convinced that peace and goodwill would return and henceforth reign amongst mankind; and he saw nothing to prevent labour and capital from striking a bargain in which both sides should have the best of it; for Lord Ryan was a man of hopeful temperament, and he felt himself all aglow with refined and polished benevolence.

Fortunately Lord Ryan's residence was situated on the shady side of the square, and the library at that hottest time of the year was delightfully cool. The rooms which Eugenie had chosen for herself on the first floor were equally cool and cheerful. The windows were thrown wide open, and through the open casement there came fluttering into the room a few hundred zephyrs who had

lost their way in the great city. They were a dusty lot, most of them ; but as they fluttered in and out gently stirring the fair locks of Eugenie, and wafting around her what they had left of sylvan fragrance, they were welcome visitors. The fair lady of the house had been bored to death by visitors of all descriptions. She had been wearied by calls upon and from all sorts of dear friends, and she had given strict orders to admit no more. The Hon. Mrs. Fairfax was not at home.

Eugenie was seated in her boudoir in a low easy chair, before a small and dainty writing table. She had been looking through a bundle of old letters, and her thoughts had flown back to the past. It is a rare thing for a healthy and gifted woman of little more than twenty summers to have such a thing as a past ; and it is still rarer for her to think about it. At twenty-three her eyes are generally fixed upon a radiant and unclouded future ; her hopes are high. If she be not given to late hours, her enjoyment is long and deep, and she feels as if the world had only come into existence at her birth.

But Eugenie had already tasted more than generally falls to the lot of women. There did not seem much else to enjoy in the world as she knew it, and a wistful thought, what she was to do with the rest of her life, persisted in returning

to her mind, and unconsciously pervading it. When a pure-minded woman no longer takes a delight in flowers, her interest in most affairs that concern her is gone. There were flowers on Eugenie's table, but she had not even glanced at them, and her interest in everything around her was of an equally feeble description. So much the more vivid was her recollection of the day-dreams she used to indulge in at her Yorkshire home, and the intense interest she used to take in everything that came from the great city and the centre of national life. What ideals had she not formed of the great and noble, and lofty-minded men whom in her ignorance she supposed to be leading the world! How busy had not her imagination been in picturing to itself the bright scenes of a season, the magnificence of a court, the brilliancy of wits, the genius of orators, and the wisdom of statesmen!

She sighed, for she had seen it all—or at least, if it had been visible she would have seen it, and she had become utterly weary. Why, she knew not, until the acute reasoning of her uncle showed her the bitter truth. It had sunk deep into her mind, that startling theory of his about the natural principle. It was but too true. She had examined every one she knew, tested every individual. Eugenie at twenty-three had become

a philosopher and a profound believer in the natural principle. The consequence of course was that something akin to disgust arose in her mind. If Overdon had not been an acute lawyer, and therefore a most illogical man, and if he had not been a strenuous advocate of women's rights, he would have known better than to teach such doctrines to a young and beautiful widow. He might as well have watered her roses with ink.

Where were the great and noble and lofty-minded? Where the wit, genius, or wisdom, she could admire? It was there, no doubt—but was it not always coupled with sordid passions, and ignoble qualities? The very situation of affairs, the conference from which her father expected so much, no longer interested her. There had been a time when she would have taken an intense interest; now she had not even cared to be present in the House when her uncle made the startling and already famous speech on the Greek question. There was a time when she would have been delighted to find herself in the midst of contending parties; but she no longer cared to originate or assist a delicate intrigue; and she recollected the time with a blush when even she had exerted fascinations, of which she was not ignorant, to discover, as only women of tact can, what inducements might be successfully held out to those men who are above a bribe.

In such a mood there had come to her, from her retreat, the following from her friend:—

“BEECHAM ABBEY, *June* — 18—.

“MY DEAREST FRIEND,

“While in your delightful abode, all around me breathes rest and tranquillity, I turn with pain and alarm to your last letters. The mistress of Beecham unhappy! You miserable and wretched! And for what reason? Can it be that I am not the only one who is made unhappy by some perfidious creature? Surely my dear Eugie is in a position so high and so exempt from the dangers of love, that I am puzzled. The cause must lie elsewhere. Now you know I don't think it is possible for anybody to enjoy this glorious world in that dusty, smoky, grimy, wilderness of houses. Imagine me at this moment, seated in the small library. The doors are open; I look across the cool shadow of the chestnut trees as a portal; there lie before me the undulating meadows of Beecham, fringed by a waving sea of foliage stretching away as far as my eye can reach, while here and there a hill pops out of the leaves. The lambs have just done grazing, and have gathered in little white patches under the hedge or beeches; and the lazy tinkling of the bell alone reminds me that all nature has not sunk in afternoon repose.

"I am dreadfully busy, but I deliberately leave my tremendous task to chat with you. Come back here and live. My heart is light. I can take in all before me with joy. Everything in the picture speaks to me. The flowers on the lawn, the parrot on his stick, holding long conversations with dear little Maud, who has carried her chair into the shadow of the chestnuts. Your snow-white pigeons strutting about on the grass and making prodigious courtesies to each other, the twittering of the birds, the distant lowing of the cattle; it is all music, all repose, and only one thing is wanting to make it all happiness: somebody to whom I could show how much I love her.

"There is something else, though, that I have forgotten. Shall I tell you what? The delightful smell of new hay—no—the sweet scent of your jasmine—no—frankly, then, the odour of that early cup of tea, which Martha is just about to bring to me, and which you are so fond of. I shall drink it in memory of you, and when I have finished my letter, we shall have a quiet tea, and probably Dr. Plumper will come, and we will walk out in the cool park, and have a long and learned conversation about the mythology of the ancients, and the striking resemblance between Jupiter and Zeus pater, which I do not understand, and do not care for. You say—'why then listen to it? Surely Dr. Plumper can talk about other things!'

Surely, my dear, Dr. Plumper can talk about everything, but I know there is nothing he likes so much as this; and what can I do in your absence but pretend to be as fond of Zeus pater as you were, though it puzzles me how you could have any great admiration for this exalted personage. If Zeus had been anything like Dr. Plumper, I could have respected him, and I daresay if he had taken long evening rambles with me in the Elysian fields, I should have become as attached to him as I am to everybody around me, but it would have taken some time. You know I don't care a bit for intellect, or genius, or profound knowledge, and your high and mighty ruler of the universe would not please me a bit more if his wit were as brilliant as his lightning.

“But I do love the old Doctor, and I wish he had been my father instead of my uncle. He is so kind and considerate, so wise, and, when not engrossed by mythology, so tender in what he says, that our evening rambles are a great treat to me, and I am sorry that he won't allow me to walk to the Vicarage with him. I found out the other day that he had given Andrew strict orders never to leave me out of sight, and to take care that I was not molested by any rude strangers or gipsies, as I was easily frightened and very timid. Andrew shook his head when he told me this.

“‘I couldn't have believed it nohow, miss,’ said

that stupid old creature, 'if it had not been the Doctor himself who told me of it; for you see, miss—ma'm, I beg your pardon—when a young lady is timid like and easy frightened, she don't go about with them there, as you do, miss. They are a canny lot; they see through you in a moment. Lord bless you, they know you in and out.'

"This, of course, alludes to Andrew's strange circle of friends in the churchyard, which nobody ever sees anything of, but which he persists in believing in and speaking about as if they were realities. Do you think there can be something true and real in this extraordinary hallucination of Andrew's? He is reasonable enough otherwise, although dreadfully headstrong; and do what I will I cannot get him to call me anything but miss. I have quarrelled with him, and shown him my little ring, and been very angry with him, and even the Doctor has once or twice rebuked him, but all he does is to shake his silvery hair and hold his tongue, and next time we meet it's exactly the same as before—'Yes, miss,' and 'No, miss,' as though I had never said a word on the subject. The other day I wanted him to be Leontes, and try how I could do the part of Hermione, but nothing in the world could move him. That was your part, and I should only spoil it, and he could not read, and his eyes were dim, and so on.

"But with all this I believe the old man is as

faithful as a dog, and as attached to me as he is to you. He has received his instructions from the Doctor not to let me out of sight or out of the park, and he takes dreadfully good care that the orders shall be executed to the letter. Why all this caution should still be necessary I cannot understand. I have written a part of my life in my diary, and when you come up you shall read it, or, if you like, I will send it to you; and you will see there that at one time I had good reason to hide myself. But it is now three years since I arrived at Beecham, and more than two since you gave me this delightful asylum, and I have not heard or seen a token of those with whom my life was so strangely interwoven. I feel a very strong desire to walk forth again and have another good long look at that great world that lies around me, of which I had so delicious and, alas! so sad a glimpse. Would I go with you to Italy? I am afraid, my dear, you will find me a very dull companion, and I fear very much that Lord Ryan will think me silly. As for the trip, it seems to me like a dream. I cannot believe that I could be made so happy; but I have no hesitation in saying that it will be for you the best possible remedy, as it will allow you to escape from your dull and vacant guests.

“My feet are at this moment resting upon the warm wool of Brutus, who, like the uncouth bear

he is, has stretched himself at full length in his favourite position under my chair. I can just see his lion-head popping out underneath my skirt, and his eyes lazily following the movements of the pigeons, as they flutter up and down the lawn. I suppose he is thinking what he could have done and would have done, if he had not been a very well educated dog, and had been taught to treat all the animals in the house like an elder brother.

“As I was writing this about your dull and vacant guests, Brutus gave a dreadful grunt, as if he knew all about it and could not bear the thought. I daresay when you took him up to town he was dreadfully bored by all these fine gentlemen and ladies, and he was glad to get back here. But even here, I am sorry to say, he is getting thin, and, if I may say so, haggard looking. I try to cheer him up as much as I can, poor fellow; but when I have done all, he will go and lie in front of your bed-room door every night, and howl, sometimes so mournfully that it makes me quite nervous. He is a strange creature, surely. His greatest delight seems to be in going to the stables and getting into the loose-box with your little horse, Tottomy. He remains there for hours, sometimes half asleep, at his feet, sometimes at full length in his crib; and Andrew tells me that he has seen Tottomy rub his nose gently along his woolly back, as

you sometimes do with your foot—I suppose to console him for the loss of his mistress.

“Now can you resist all this? Can you remain packed up in London when we all want you back? If you can, I must add another inducement. What do you think? As we had so often spoken about the little church in the park, and lamented that it had been so woefully damaged by the Round-heads, and as Dr. Plumper was firmly convinced that at one time the interior must have been highly ornamented and exquisitely beautiful, I got it into my head one day to tell Andrew to scrape off the dirt, and chalk, and mortar on the capital of one of the pillars close to the organ loft. It was much against his will at first, as he thought it sacrilegious; but after working for about half an hour, we were quite amazed to find appearing through the coating of dirt, or whatever it may be, the purest white stone, carved and chiselled in a manner most exquisite. I am quite convinced that the entire church is like this, or has been, for I am afraid some of it is dreadfully damaged. Dr. Plumper, who looked at it next day, says that he can quite understand it. General Fairfax took possession of this place with some of his troops, and this church being ornamented in a more than usually elaborate style—as is plainly shown by some of the plans that we found in the library, you remember—he gave orders to have it so white-

washed and altered that it might become that positive heap of deformities it now is. We have often talked about restoration, and speculated whether it would be worth while. Could you not get some experienced artist down from London to give his opinion? Surely some of your great friends will be only too glad to come and pay us a visit. He can see the church, and say whether it will be worth the trouble and expense, and then he can see your pictures at the same time. I declare the plan has quite taken my fancy. I shall be delighted to bear some of the expense, and so will the Doctor, I am sure; and to see the ugliness disappear bit by bit, and the pillars and windows come out in all their original beauty and simple grandeur, with perhaps a tiny carved pulpit, and some nice ornamental oak seats to see our little church the handsomest in the county, would be delightful. What do you say to that? Will you not speak to somebody about it? And come down here to talk it over with Dr. Plumper and your ever-affectionate

“ KATHERINE.”

CHAPTER VI.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE.

EUGENIE had fallen into a reverie, with the open letter lying upon her lap, when her maid entered, and reminded her that the time was approaching for the conference at which she had announced her intention to be present. With a tiny yawn, Mistress Eugenie pulled out her watch, and, still in a reverie, glanced at it and mechanically put it back, without having noticed that it entirely agreed with the clock on the mantel-piece, which at that moment struck half-past twelve. The silvery sound made her start up with some alacrity, and she hastened to her dressing-room to have her morning toilet completed. Let it not be supposed that in becoming indifferent to the world, the young widow had become indifferent to herself. She knew too well that indifference was not becoming, and it would have been difficult for her to dress otherwise than with

taste. She would rather not appear at all, than appear ugly, or, what was perhaps worse — ill-arranged; and it was no trouble to her to resign herself to the deft hands of her maid.

The letter somehow had cheered her. The simple tone of affection was pleasant; the picture of the quiet shady country house was charming. And here—when this conference was over, there came visits to dull people, a drive in a dull park, a dinner with a dull ambassador, and a dull opera to finish up with. Ah me! as she sighed over the prospect, there suddenly rung in her ears the words, “And this is our new creed, to make Labour less irksome, and Luxury less easy.” Good heavens! “Luxury less easy!” What could the man have meant who said these words? Could he ever have known luxury? He looked as if he had known irksome labour, although she remembered to have noticed that his hands were singularly clean and smooth! And what a sweet, mellow voice it was! And altogether it was a very odd thing that such a man, a common working-man probably, should be so gentle in speech and manner; and have such broad shoulders, too, and such a proud way of throwing his head back. She wondered whether he would come that afternoon to the conference, and whether he would look as neat and clean as before.

“Oh, Douglas,” said she, suddenly, “I forgot

to say that I shall put on that new cap this afternoon."

"That new cap, ma'am?" said Douglas, with some astonishment; "why, you have never worn it yet."

"Well, I suppose I must wear it once for the first time, and I shall be the only lady among so many gentlemen this afternoon. It is not very big, but it will give me a more matronly appearance."

Douglas smiled with her knowing lips, and said nothing. But she managed to drop the tiny badge of widowhood—a feathery compound of lace and ruffles—between the waves of front hair and the tortoise-shell comb; and there it lay like a cloudlet upon the blooming and fragrant heather on the mountain side. A glance in the mirror, and Mistress Eugenie went down to the library comforted in spirit. However old she might feel, the mirror evidently did not think so; nor did Douglas, nor, to tell the truth, did she herself. As she went down-stairs, a suspicion crossed her mind that she had entered into this feeling of age with a great deal too much spirit and energy, and she could scarcely help smiling.

There happened to be opposite that door of the library a fine steel engraving of the celebrated picture of Napoleon addressing the Ancients, previous to his dissolution of the Five Hundred. The youthful conqueror, just returned from Egypt, with fresh

though dripping laurels, stands at one end of the table, which is surrounded by the ancient councillors, who have come crowding down from their seats. All eyes are turned upon him, and seem to follow the few words that fall from his lips; all features are agitated, and express apprehension, curiosity, alarm. Amidst these, his face alone is calm and decided. He is evidently speaking, curtly, and straight to his purpose. A slight smile of disdain curls his lips. To Eugenie it seemed that his eyes looked at her and fathomed the very depths of her soul—they seemed to smile at her, to read her, to rest upon her as though they had long known her. She started, and felt the colour rising in her cheeks.

Surely she had seen those eyes before? Not in the picture, for although it had been in the same place ever since she remembered, she had never been so impressed by them. They seemed lit up with the reflection of some other light—something lofty, beyond the gleams of the natural principle. A recollection flashed across her that these same calm, lucid, and absorbing eyes had rested upon her once before; that the same smile of conscious power and superiority had attracted her attention.

She had entered the room without noise, and paused in front of the picture with a strange wonder what could have been the feelings of poor Josephine when those eyes were upon her. Silent

though she was, her dress rustled, and Lord Ryan, who was seated at the farther end of the long and somewhat darkened room, looked up with a smile in his eye.

"My first commissioner," said he, holding out his hand, "you shall preside over our councils. But you need not look so grave."

Eugenie put her hand into his, and touched his forehead with her lips.

"Why should I not?" said she.

"Why should you? On this glorious day, you look almost as solemn as a matron of fifty."

"And so I ought, when we are going to decide upon such grave and momentous questions."

"If we had female lawyers in these days," said her father, "we should have to make you a judge; for I am sure you are sober enough for a whole court."

"But not half impartial enough," answered she, shaking her head. "I could not possibly sit in that great chair and listen to a story that was being slowly unravelled before me, without taking some side. Do you know if to-day's case were left to me I would make very short work of it. Now, I daresay, nothing will be decided."

"Oh, I hope so," said Lord Ryan. "At any rate I trust we shall come to some better understanding. I shall press both Kennedy and Harrick to make a full statement of their ideas, and I hope

to get Burgos to do the same. You shake your head? Why not—why not?”

“I am afraid, my dear father, that all the men who come here will come as the representatives of what they won’t give up. They are ready to relinquish everything that concerns other people, but won’t allow any meddling with what concerns themselves. How will you come to a decision there?”

“You are dreadfully sweeping in your assertions. I have had at least thirty years’ more experience in these matters than you, and I say emphatically you are mistaken.”

“You know, papa, that we women have these things by instinct, and I still believe I am right. Have you found men ready to give up anything unless they thought it a good bargain?”

“What instinct?” said Lord Ryan, laughing. “You, a girl scarcely out of her teens, talk like an old diplomatist——”

“I feel dreadfully old sometimes,” replied Eugenie, putting her hands on her father’s shoulder; “but is not this the rule of the world? Would any man give what he can expect to sell?”

“Not generally, perhaps; but there are public-minded men. There’s Lord Burgos, for instance.”

“And, pray, what did Lord Burgos say about you selling your land in Thamestone to the club?”

Did he not say that he would never sell his land—never—never?”

“Ah, as a matter of principle, he was undoubtedly right. There can be no great constitution without great landlords—there can be no great landlords without land. He was unquestionably correct there. But why should not that principle be modified to meet isolated cases? Why not? Why not?”

“It might,” said Eugenie, “but what good would it do here? It will be as I expect, and as it has so often been, a haggling over individual cases, which may produce a small effect for the immediate future, but no more. I am convinced that these men will apply to your great constitution some new principle of their own which underlies their entire system of agitation.”

“And that is——?”

“To make labour as honourable and nearly as profitable as leisure.”

“Pooh, child, whatever brings that notion into your head?” cried Lord Ryan. “Leisure can never be profitable in itself; besides, nobody nowadays looks down on labour.”

“But everybody looks down on the labourer; and as long as that is not altered you will get nothing, by your conferences. What can you offer these men, except what they ask for?”

“I have hit upon a compromise, which I flatter

myself would satisfy them and, I think, ourselves. I have put the heads down on this slip of paper—see here; and at a certain part of the meeting I intend to propose them. Why should they not be accepted, and make the basis of a new understanding between us? Why not, eh?”

While she leaned over his shoulder, and perused the somewhat elaborate document which her father had spent the morning in preparing, the lightsome voice of her uncle Overdon was heard in the hall, and he entered the room almost immediately, as he always did, without waiting to be announced. He affectionately kissed his niece on both cheeks, and then holding her out before him at arms' length, smiled and shook his forefinger at her.

“What is it?” said she, colouring slightly; “wherein have I sinned, good my lord?”

“Vanity, my dear, is not a sin,” said he; “but I did not expect to find you afflicted with that weakness.”

“I suppose it is natural to a woman,” pouted Eugenie. “Papa said he would make me a judge; but you would not make me a man as well, would you?”

“I would as soon change a lily into a thistle,” said he. “But, if it's not rude, why exactly to-day?”

“Why what to-day?” asked the lady, as though she had not a distant idea of his meaning.

"Upon my word, I never noticed it," said Lord Ryan, whose attention was now for the first time attracted. "At last then, after my asking you so often to wear it, if only in deference to public opinion."

"And after your telling me that public opinion was not worth listening to," said she triumphantly.

"Yes, very true," said her father; "I did not mind your leaving it off. Only, as Charles says, why resume it exactly to-day?"

"Because I thought to-day most appropriate," answered she. "What is your objection? Don't you think it becoming?"

"It is a great deal too becoming," said Overdon slowly, and looking again at the delicate lacework. "There is something more than the garb of sorrow in this."

"And that something is——"

"Well, if I might be allowed to use a nautical term," said Overdon, with a wicked smile, "I would feel inclined to say that it is a kind of Blue Peter."

"Your nautical language is rather obscure," said she, with a slight frown.

"Nautical language generally is," said Overdon. "Ask your father for an explanation. He is a regular water-rat."

Eugenie looked at her father with elevated eyebrows.

"A Blue Peter, my dear," said Lord Ryan, with humorous gravity, "is that small sign which is put out by a vessel when it is in need of assistance, and wants to get into port. The water-rats ashore who see it conclude that she is in quest of a pilot."

"And you are both water-rats, I suppose?" said Eugenie.

"No, we are only plain town-mice," said Overdon; "but some other folks coming here this morning are not only big water-rats, but very willing pilots as well."

"Then I shall take care they do not see my signal," said Eugenie, laughing somewhat forcedly. She unfastened the bands and tore the cap away almost roughly. At that moment a carriage with a splendid pair of bays flew past the windows, and drew up at the door. Eugenie hastily thrust the delicate article behind a row of books in a bookcase, and with a few strokes adjusted the hair that had become disturbed by the operation, when the door opened, and the servant announced Lord Burgos. Eugenie blushed, but could not help throwing a look of guileless mirth at her uncle, which, as he caught it, very nearly sent him into a laugh.

It was no mean flattery when it was said of the Earl, that he never appeared anywhere without attracting and fettering attention. There was

something in his tall and elegant bearing, his small but aristocratic and well-shaped head, the sharp glance of his eye, but above all the seemingly unconscious dignity of his manner that was very striking. Eugenie had never been slow to acknowledge this; and but for the strange repugnance she always felt at his approach, she might have been led to admire the great and powerful young nobleman. Her laughter vanished at his appearance. She felt that his eye sought hers at once—she met it. Was that the eye that had struck her in the picture? It was sharp enough, and perhaps as brilliant, but when it met hers and fell, she knew that the man who stood before her was not a conqueror, nor possessed the spirit that could make one!

“I hope this meeting will be satisfactory,” said she, giving him her hand frankly.

“Will you be present at our tournament?” asked the Earl. “I fear there will be some hard blows exchanged.”

“I am prepared for that,” said she. “You are punctual.”

“I never like to keep a working-man waiting, for I know that time is all he has in the world.”

“I would not say it was *all* he had in the world,” said Overdon. “You surely give our proletarian credit for *some* talent.”

“I should be very sorry to give him credit for

anything," said Sir Richard Steele, who had entered the room during the last words, and was making a heavy and clumsy bow to Mrs. Fairfax and Lord Ryan. If you had ever employed them, Mr. Overdon, you would know how very rare both these articles are among them—talent and credit."

"I differ from you, Sir Richard," said Overdon. "I have not only employed them, but they have employed me, as you ought to know. I found a good deal of the one, and I would not have objected to give the other."

"You are quite right, Mr. Overdon," said Lord Burgos, "but you caught me up so sharply. Yet Sir Richard is also correct. The fact is, I think the two go together. Where you find talent, you may safely give credit, for there you have self-respect. Whether your ordinary labourer has either is a difficult question."

"I am afraid, Sir Richard," said Eugenie, "that your dispute with your men at Thamestone has not ended quite satisfactorily. Lord Ryan told me something about a disturbance."

"My dear madam," said the knight warmly, "the name of Thamestone drives me almost mad. The entire town is changed. Nobody works, and everybody talks. I should not be surprised if these men try to introduce the guillotine. And now I am told by Maurice that the railway men show signs of discontent."

"It's true enough, Mrs. Fairfax," said Mr. Maurice, who had just then been announced. "Somehow the whole line is going wrong, and it seems worst at Thamestone. Some folly seems to possess them there."

"Yet," said Lord Ryan pensively, "they have paid me the sum I named for the land, to the day, and when I spoke to them, they seemed in buoyant spirits."

"Buoyant spirits!" exclaimed Sir Richard, "the only spirits I ever find them in are strong spirits. I am not the man to shrink from meeting any of my workmen, but they go far, sir, they go very far."

"It seems to me, gentlemen, that it is high time something was done," said Lord Ryan, benevolently. "Here comes Lord Daintry. I am delighted you are going to give us your advice, my dear friend."

"H'm, advice," grumbled his Lordship, "it's a very queer thing, to come and meet a set of men whom you are very much inclined to horse-whip. I don't know how you feel in the matter?"

"I feel that it would be wiser to try some parleying and counselling first," said Lord Ryan.

"It's too late for that," said Lord Daintry. "Look what I received from my collieries this morning. If ever a man took trouble over his collieries, it was I. And I have the reputation, too, of being a staunch Whig. Not an out-and-

out Tory, like Lord Burgos. See how they treat me! Coolly ask me for a reduction of hours, with a hint that I should vote for the repeal of the Labour Laws."

"It's all that fellow Harrick and his set," cried Sir Richard Steele.

"It looks as if that set were all over the country, Sir Richard," said Eugenie.

"That's the worst of it, madam," said he. "It is no very difficult or clever thing for any man to raise a cry of fire in a crowded theatre, and you may be sure that hundreds all over the building will follow his example. But does that show that there really is a fire, or that they believe so? I am convinced it is as usual, a few demagogues and disreputable fellows who create a stir. That's all."

"You have a neat way of packing demagogues and disreputable people in one basket," said Overdon. "Do you know, sir, that *demagogia* has become a respectable profession? But, if I am not mistaken, here they come."

CHAPTER VII.**THE CONFERENCE.**

It was with considerable foresight that Lord Ryan had arranged the simultaneous entry of the two working-men and the popular Radical member, Thomas Payne. Their meeting, on the steps of the big house, seemed perfectly accidental; yet neither Kennedy nor Harrick were sorry to receive his cordial welcome, and pass through the hall by his side. The suavity of the servants was perhaps a trifle too condescending, when they took charge of the gentlemen's hats, but Harrick, who was rather absent, scarcely noticed it, and retained in his hand a scroll of designs, which he had to submit to some one that morning.

They entered together, and it appeared at once that a formal introduction was unnecessary, for both delegates were personally known to the majority of those present. Indeed a significant nod of recognition passed between Kennedy and Mr. Maurice, since not many days ago, they had been opposed

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in an important arbitration case. The Earl of Burgos, too, remembered the engineer perfectly, for less than a year ago, being down at one of his estates in Wales, to support a rising scion of his house, he had met this same bulky northerner, in front of the platform. Mr. Kennedy had on that evening made it rather warm for the candidate, and had so soundly lectured not only him, but the Earl, into the bargain, that powerful interest and skilful tactics had been barely sufficient to pull the rising scion through. The Earl felt sore about it at the time, but he could not deny that the superiority of brains had not been altogether on his side.

This introduction into an elegant, tapestried, and pictured apartment, was not greatly to Mr. Kennedy's liking. His look was almost scowling, and the bow which he directed towards the fair lady of the house, who had seated herself in an arm-chair, at the far end of the table, might have passed very well for a slight motion of a steam-hammer.

"We know that your time is valuable, gentlemen," said Lord Ryan, pointing to chairs which had been left empty, "and if you do not object we will at once proceed to business."

"Before beginning, my lord," said Kennedy, "you will allow me to remark that whatever is said here is of a strictly private character. Some of the gentlemen may be aware that I hold certain

positions of trust, and, under the circumstances, it is, I hope, understood that I speak solely and only as John Kennedy, a private man and an engineer."

"Of course," said Lord Burgos; "we are all private and confidential here. It is not a cabinet-council."

"The first question which naturally comes up for discussion," said Lord Ryan, "is, of course, this demonstration which you have organised."

"I have organised no demonstration," interrupted Kennedy; "and you will excuse me if I do not therefore consider it a proper subject for discussion."

"Why!" exclaimed Burgos blandly, "I thought it was the very question we had met to discuss."

"Then I am afraid there's some misapprehension," said the engineer cautiously.

"But surely," said Lord Burgos, "when the greatest city in the world is in danger of being turned upside down, its *peaceful* and contented citizens should be allowed a chance to stop such dangerous proceedings?"

"I fully appreciate that word peaceful," said Kennedy, bluntly, "but it is not within my power to discuss anything of which John Kennedy, a private individual, knows nothing. If you like to discuss demonstrations in general, I am at your service."

"What nonsense this is, Kennedy," cried rough

and ready Sir Richard, with energy. "You talk like a Highlander. You know very well that this confound—I beg pardon, madam—this ill-conceived affair is the talk of the day, and that you are one of the leaders in it. Did you not publicly discuss the arrangements at your Brotherhood meeting the other day?"

"We have discussed nothing publicly," replied Kennedy, doggedly. "But if we had, this is not a Brotherhood meeting, and you will excuse my saying that you are now—a long way from being a skilled engineer."

"Very well, Kennedy," said Lord Burgos, "since you will have it so, let us speak of demonstrations in general. You do not for a moment suppose that Government can permit it, do you?"

"What do you know about the Government, my Lord?" asked Kennedy, bluntly.

"I know this," replied the Earl, sternly, "that they will not fail in their chief duty, the maintenance of order. A demonstration on so large a scale is a mere riotous mob."

"It is nothing of the kind, sir," retorted Kennedy. "I appeal to Mr. Payne. More than ten years ago he first attracted notice by heading a procession exceeding ten thousand men, and I am not aware that there was a single breach of the law. But that is an event of which you perhaps have no personal knowledge."

The Earl could scarcely help colouring at this thrust at his youth. Mr. Payne looked annoyed, for he flattered himself that his political origin was being forgotten. "I discovered at that time," said he solemnly, "that these processions are exceedingly dangerous things to play with."

"We have not the slightest intention of playing with them," answered Kennedy. "We know our object, and we are not such fools as to think that it can be obtained by riot, or anything approaching to it."

"But will it do any good? You want the repeal of the Criminal Laws, do you not?"

"Yes, that is one of the things we want, but not the only one."

"That is the principal one, at any rate," said Lord Burgos; "and I put it to you, whether this will procure you the sympathy of the public, which is, after all, what you desire; or whether a calm statement of grievances would not serve your purpose better than a procession which will arouse the whole of London, and put half the population in fear of their property."

"It would do nothing of the kind, my lord," said Kennedy, with some irritation. "It is a libel upon the working-man to say this. If we are not interfered with, we shall lay hand on no man. We shall be as decorous as the House of Lords."

"But you shall be interfered with," said Sir

Richard promptly. "We have made up our minds to that."

"Then you must take the consequences, Sir Richard," said Kennedy firmly. "It's our right—our national right; and if I stood before the assembled House at this moment I would say the same thing. There will be no riot if we are left alone; but if you particularly want one, you can soon have it."

"These are bold words, Mr. Kennedy," said Lord Ryan; "and they are spoken with a good deal of assurance."

"With no more assurance than I feel, sir," answered Kennedy.

"I would have said with a good deal of impertinence," said Sir Richard. "You must not think that you have come here to dictate to us. You are an agitator, and I believe you only represent a small part of the opinion of your people. I am given to understand that Mr. Harrick has much more sympathy on his side."

Thus personally appealed to, Harrick had no option but to speak. For the first time in his life he felt a strange embarrassment. It had fallen upon him as he entered the room; he scarcely knew in what manner of world he found himself. It was not the handsome apartment, it was not the dignified features of the senators, nor the mass of books that seemed to look down upon him. It

was a feeling that somebody in the room watched him with deep interest, and a voice whispered to him that a pair of beautiful eyes were fixed upon him with an expression of deep concern.

"I don't know why you should say so, Sir Richard," said he, endeavouring to speak calmly. "At all events, you are incorrect. I am not prepared to subscribe at all times to Kennedy's views, or he to mine; but on this matter we are perfectly agreed. Lord Burgos spoke of demonstrations in general, and in general and on principle he condemned them."

"I did," said the Earl, with some haughtiness. "I believe we all condemn the principle of these public demonstrations."

"In us you mean," said Harrick. "You do not condemn them in yourselves."

"I don't understand you. I am not aware that we are given to that kind of thing."

"Why, sir, your very existence is a public demonstration. The pomp with which you assemble, the superiority which you assume in summoning to your House the representatives of the people, the tone of your speeches, the publicity of your proceedings, what are these but the public demonstrations of a class—the inactive class of this realm?"

"This is the oddest sentiment I have ever heard," said old Lord Daintry. "'Pon my soul, it is funny

that I should come here to get my position explained by a young journeyman, 'pon my soul it is, Ryan."

"We are not discussing the House of Lords at present, Mr. Harrick," said Lord Ryan. "What we want to impress upon you is that we do not object to your meeting—Heaven forbid!—we have always encouraged it in a proper way. What we object to and shall oppose is that gathering in large numbers which it is impossible to control."

"But surely, my lord," said the young champion, "you forget that our number is the only strength and the only power by which we claim consideration. If there were no more working-men than there are peers, we could assemble as much as we liked, and the whole world would not heed us. If there were only eleven hundred working men in this country instead of eleven million, we should have to obtain everything as a favour; and what between those who would educate us and those who would leave us in ignorance, those who consider us absolutely honest and absolutely sober and those who think we are seldom industrious and always drunk, there would soon be an end of us. But there are eleven million of us, and we know our minds, and we know that what we justly desire we shall obtain."

"Then are we to understand," said Lord Ryan seriously, "that you intend parading your

numbers in the streets of this city with the purpose of intimidating us and forcing from us our consent?"

"Why, my lord," said Kennedy, with a sparkling eye, "I would not call it intimidation—keep to demonstration. Our object is to demonstrate to the world that we are overwhelmingly numerous."

"That is where you are wrong," exclaimed Lord Burgos. "You are committing a flagrant constitutional mistake. It is neither lawful nor expedient to lash any class into fury by misrepresentations and highly-coloured statements, to flatter them by exalting their own power, and intoxicate them with the sense of their own strength, and then to turn them loose upon the street and allow them to do what they please. I tell you, sir, since that procession before alluded to took place I have set my face against anything of the kind, and I have made a vow never to be a consenting party to any reform, or repeal, or modification that you attempt to wring from the nation in such a manner."

"We know that," said Harrick, gravely and respectfully. "We know what your opinions are, and how great your influence is in the House and in the country, and I am thankful that we have been for a moment brought face to face with you. We have read your speeches with that admiration which I believe Englishmen only can feel for opponents; and the gentlemen, I am sure, will

forgive me, if in the name of the working-men of England—whose sentiments I believe I do to some extent know—I appeal to you henceforth to look upon them in a different light. My Lord, you are a powerful enemy, and with your eloquence roused for a cause like ours, you would be a magnificent ally. There is work enough to occupy your lifetime, and to make your name in Westminster Abbey more glorious than Chatham, and more truly great than Pitt. I feel that I am addressing gentlemen who will excuse any seeming forwardness, because what must be said had better be said plainly and openly. English workmen have hitherto led the working world, but we have until lately scarcely known it. When we got to know it, we got to know at the same time that other nations were making rapid forward strides, that we are losing ground in the race, and that unless we exert ourselves we shall be beaten. If we have been losing our opportunities, it is surely to the interest of the entire nation that we should do so no longer. I know that regeneration must begin amongst ourselves, and I am certain that it has already begun. But why should we immediately meet with opposition? Why should powerful parties in the Legislature be leagued against us? We begin by endeavouring to amend an act which, as it stands, threatens us with degradation, and we are already condemned

without a hearing. But gentlemen, we want much more than this. We want a far more comprehensive system of education; we want a thorough revision of taxation, and of the Poor Law. We desire to have the universities and their scientific teaching brought within our easy reach; we desire to have all art schools, museums, and libraries thrown open on all days, so that we may employ our leisure in improvement, if we desire it. We feel that we are greatly deficient in intellectual training, and that in the struggle for existence intellect gains the day. And if in the expression of these desires we are opposed by men who have hitherto monopolised all intellectual training, can you be astonished if we determine to show you what strength there is behind us? I am not so foolish as to imagine that you have not considered these matters deeply, but you have probably never heard our side of the question stated calmly. You are the summit of the national edifice, but we are the foundation, and when the English working-man loses his proud position in the world, he will drag everything else with him into decay."

CHAPTER VIII.

IDLE TALK.

STRANGE as these words would have sounded from most other lips, they awakened within the listeners no feeling of astonishment or discontent. The easy fluency of Harrick's speech, the moderation of his tone, and, withal, his modest firmness, pleased men who were compelled night after night to listen to harangues that possessed none of these good qualities. As for Eugenie, she had noticed the glance, quick as lightning, which Harrick had thrown in her direction, and she knew that he had become aware of her attention. She felt angry at this self-betrayal, and, resolving to show nothing but indifference henceforth, had taken up her embroidery and began stitching with great zeal. Alas! there was something so sweet in the low melodious voice, that she listened in spite of herself, and listened with secret joy. Had there been anything forward, forced, or unnatural in his bearing, she would have closed her ears; but it was evident that he had

forgotten any difference in rank and circumstance, and spoke from a pure elevation of public interest alone.

When he had become thoroughly engrossed with his subject, and addressed himself with grave earnestness to the Earl, the glance that swept past her reminded her in an instant of what she had seen that morning in the picture of the young Dictator. Unconscious of the act, she gazed upon him; as Harrick uttered his last words, and his eyes, full of lofty expression, turned upon her, she knew where she had met that look before. She met his gaze—forgetting that she ought to have been doing ever so much embroidery—and meeting it, she saw his eye soften, and become tender as that of a mother. It was only then that she remembered her work, and turned her eyes down with some confusion.

Lord Burgos, who, like most sinners, objected to be preached at and made the subject of a discourse, was nevertheless not at all displeased. The decided flattery of the young proletarian's words tickled even his well-trained vanity, and they displayed an amount of vigour that charmed his intellect. But he had not been the pupil and companion of diplomatists for so many years without knowing that it was out of the question to show such feelings.

"This is all very fine, Mr. Harrick," said he, in

a somewhat constrained manner, "but you will please remember that we have not come here to listen to a disquisition on things in general. You have not put your case so badly as I expected, but you make the common mistake in thinking that we are opposed to any and every improvement. I firmly believe we are the only friends of true and lasting progress; but what we object to is this unconstitutional mode of proceeding. We may grant all you ask, and more, but only after mature deliberation. We must not be coerced or threatened by demonstrations. That is revolution, and be assured that in putting down revolution we shall show more firmness than either the House of Stuart or the House of Capet. As to this law you desire to repeal, nothing that I have heard has suggested an improvement. Imprisonment must hang over your heads to prevent you from wilfully leaving your employment, knowing that you will not only cause the employer serious loss, but throw hundreds out of employment, for the sake of a few shillings, or perhaps out of spite. And as you have talked of not maintaining your position in Europe, I call upon these gentlemen, mostly great employers, to tell me whether I am not right in saying that English commerce and manufacture have suffered by nothing so much as by the perversity, the wilful and obstinate neglect practised by working-men. Take imprisonment away, and

you take away the last check. It is not education, it is not taxation; it is not Sunday museums or Poor-law, but it is the working-man himself, and his headstrong resistance to all reason, that will annihilate his influence in the world, and drag him into that decay of which you speak."

"I echo those words, my lord," said Maurice emphatically. "I am a man of no party, but in this respect I believe I am bound to be conservative."

"I have always been a good friend to the working-man," said Sir Richard Steele, "and I have never yet applied this law; but I believe we are their best friends in refusing to repeal it. Their unpunished breaking of contracts would be our ruin, and our ruin would be theirs."

"You are quite right, sir," said Kennedy, looking sharply at him. "Twenty years ago, when you were in a much smaller way of business, your ruin proved the ruin of a good many."

"I don't quite understand your remark," said the knight.

"You were engaged in a contract at Fogtown, employing over a hundred hands, and failed to pay them their week's wages. The men had to shift as best they could, and some went to the workhouse for a bit."

"Ha—my relations with the Fogtown Corporation were of a nature which it would be difficult

to explain here. But that is quite a different matter. What I owed them at the time was wages, for which they had a civil remedy. What an employer imprisons for is compensation for injury."

"And do you think," asked Harrick, "that these men sustained no injury in being so suddenly thrown out of employment, and left to shift for themselves?"

"If they sustained injury, and had a good cause, it was open to them to apply the law."

"Yes," said Harrick, bitterly, "at what cost? Five pounds, and probably an adjournment until you had been made a bankrupt. This is a farce, sir. At the present time no working-man has redress, because of the excessive cost, and because imprisonment with employers is out of the question. The magistrate takes good care to give you plenty of time to get your money together. We get forty-eight hours."

"Then what is it you complain of," said Lord Ryan, "and what is it you propose?"

"We complain of these summary proceedings," said Kennedy; "and there is not, I think, a working-man in the United Kingdom that does not condemn them. Our propositions are embodied in the Bill which we got Mr. Payne, after much trouble, to bring before the House. In the country all these cases should be dealt with by

stipendiaries only, for other magistrates know not the law, and, being fine gentlemen, are likely to be moved by class views. And in both town and country all these cases should be considered as purely civil, and a workman who is condemned to pay a certain sum should be allowed to pay it by easy instalments, failing which he is answerable with his body."

"And allow me to add," said Harrick, "that the most important alteration is this—that when a case has once been brought up for judgment and decided, the payment or ultimate imprisonment should be allowed to annul the contract."

"Is that not the case now?" asked the Earl of Burgos.

"It is not, sir. Under the present law if a man is determined by the injustice of his contract not to fulfil it he may be fined, and fined again and again, and imprisoned time after time, if his employer should think fit to prosecute him for each breach of contract."

"That is a very extreme and impossible case," said Mr. Maurice. "I don't believe it."

"It may be extreme but it is not impossible," said Harrick, "for only the other day a man, who had broken a contract which he deemed unjust, was condemned to pay heavy compensation and costs. He paid them, but continued to absent himself from his work. He was again taken up

on a warrant, charged before the magistrate, and sent to prison for three months. He went to prison for that period, and soon after he came out he was apprehended again—his contract being for five years. His Union then assisted him, and had a case granted for a superior court. Mr. Overdon will tell you what became of it there.”

“The statement is quite correct,” said Overdon, who had hitherto been silent. “The case was argued, and the court decided that the employers had full power to get another conviction; so that I suppose they will go on fining and imprisoning him until his five years are up.”

“Ah, well, I am sure that is a very isolated case,” said Sir Richard, “and I don’t mind saying that something should be done there. But as to ordinary imprisonment—I am convinced it is no hardship, and must remain.”

“It seems a pity,” said Lord Ryan, “that moral persuasion and influence cannot be left to exert their power. There are enough natural criminals already, without going to the trouble of making artificial ones.”

“It is impossible,” cried Sir Richard; “moral influence goes for nothing, and a mere civil action has not the slightest effect on men who possess nothing in the world.”

“Besides,” said Lord Daintry, “the process would be so slow, and so expensive, in comparison

with each individual sum, that employers would lose half their time and money in courts."

"Far better that, sir," said Kennedy, "than that we should lose all our time and reputation in prison."

"It's your own fault, if that comes to pass," answered his lordship curtly. "Every man knows what he has to expect, and it is right that he should know that he cannot upset his employer with impunity."

"By Heaven, sir," cried Kennedy with some warmth, "you talk of upsetting employers as if we murdered them by breaking our contracts. Is it not a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence—is it not, after all, a mere debt; and what has that to do with the felon's prison and hard labour? You talk of our upsetting employers, but do you think that a fortnight in prison does not upset us—throw us into the vicinity of outcasts—degrade us—spoil the quality of our future work, and embitter our minds? I leave cases of wilful and malicious neglect out of the question, they can be dealt with under the ordinary Criminal Law; but I tell you, gentlemen, this law shall and must be altered. It presses hardly on us, and it must go."

"It does seem to press hardly somewhere," said Lord Ryan. "The difficulty is how to amend it."

"There is no difficulty," said Kennedy, with

loud and determined voice, and clenching his fist. "Things such as these, my lord, are a blot upon England, and we shall not rest until they have been wiped away completely. I began by refusing to speak about this demonstration, but it is perhaps better to give you fair warning that we mean to hold it, and that the entire House of Peers will not be able to shake our resolution."

"I am afraid you are a violent man, Kennedy," said Lord Burgos. "You had better count the cost, before you begin to build up your tower of sedition."

"We have counted that cost, my lord," retorted Kennedy with warmth, "and our tower is based upon a foundation so strong and so broad, that we defy all the world. I shall be willing to enter into any other question, but on this we are resolved."

"Then I must beg Lord Ryan to bring this meeting to an end," said Lord Burgos sharply. "It is getting on for three, and we are wasting our time. I have a committee meeting to attend."

"It is actually ten minutes to three," cried Sir Richard. "I must hurry away. Madam, your most devoted servant."

CHAPTER IX.

A PROMISE.

THE two men of the people issued out of the big house, and wended their way past other big houses which they might have helped to build; and for a few moments they were both silent. Kennedy's face no longer wore the scowl which had frightened the butler.

"I don't think we have done badly, my lad," said he complacently. "I thought it would have gone worse."

"I am sorry that we could not have come to some more definite agreement," said Harrick. "We have gained nothing."

"Ay, that we have, lad," said Kennedy; "we have given them fair warning; we have shown them that our minds are made up, and that the only thing they can do under the circumstances is to give in, which they will."

"Which they won't, as far as I can see. You know I have always been of opinion that violent

measures should be kept as a last resource, and I can't help thinking that this procession will be a most violent measure."

"Well, let it be; it will teach them reason. We have waited long enough, and I am amazed to see you so chicken-hearted; I thought you were made of bolder metal, Harrick; or have you been talked over by some of these fine gentlemen?"

"No, indeed; if there has been any talking over, it has been on my side, I should say."

"Well, take care, lad; you're only young, and when I was your age there was many a thing that influenced me most powerfully, without my knowing anything about it at the time. I say, take care. I'm going across the park."

Harrick had felt the blood come into his cheeks at these words, spoken by the honest Kennedy with his usual calmness and shrewdness, and somehow he could not meet the glance which the other had turned upon him. He paused in Pall Mall.

"I promised Mason I would take the designs for that memorial slab this afternoon to Hampstead, so I suppose my way will lie in an opposite direction. By-the-bye, I must have left my plans at the house. How very stupid!"

"Ay, lad, I remember you put them down behind you on the chair," said Kennedy, with another shrewd look; "you had better go and fetch

them. Maybe, you will find some of them still there. But Warren, lad, take you care."

Harrick gave a quick nod, and turned round sharply, to evade the severe and inquiring glance of his companion. He felt angry and almost insulted by Kennedy's tone, and yet there was, he must confess, no small amount of worldly wisdom in the remark. With the soul of a poet, and the passionate love of the beautiful, which had made him an artist, he was as yet scarcely aware of the deep influence which that visit had made upon him; and it was only in the beating of his own heart, and the sweet sensation that came over him as he once more approached the house, that he found the answer to his friend's warning.

Kennedy had been correct in surmising that some of the gentlemen would still be there. Harrick found the door open and a splendid carriage, with Lord Burgos's two well-known bays impatiently champing upon their bits, a few yards higher up. Harrick stepped into the hall and found himself face to face with the nobleman. For a moment he was extremely embarrassed, and his behaviour might have become somewhat awkward but for the excellent tact of the Earl, who had felt by instinct that it was of the utmost importance to him to change this young man, if possible, from an opponent into an ally.

"Oh, Mr. Harrick," said he, with his own winning smile, and touching the young man lightly upon the shoulder, "I am very glad you have come back, for I wanted much to say a few words to you alone."

"I find that I have left a scroll of drawings in the room where we were," said Harrick, slightly bowing, "which I have come to fetch."

"I have no doubt you will find them in there. Now, Mr. Harrick, allow me to thank you privately for the way in which you spoke to me and of me. It is not the place here nor the time to confess to you in how far you have touched one of the truest chords in my heart. The day will not, perhaps, be far distant when I shall be prepared to place myself at the head of a movement which will have for its object the obtaining of all you desire, and more. Mind you, this is strictly private and confidential. I am slowly gaining a party in the House, and biding my time; but I ask you, sir, what chance have I of succeeding, if this insane procession, and the public commotion which is likely to follow, are allowed to take place? Don't you feel this yourself?"

"May I ask, my lord," said Harrick, biting his lip, "with what object you say this to me? You'll excuse me if I am puzzled."

"It is, perhaps, strange that a man in my position should make such a revelation to a man

in yours, but you are no stranger to me, Mr. Harrick. I have for some time followed you with interest, and have come to the conclusion that you are no ordinary man. If you were a mere turbulent demagogue, like that Kennedy, I would not waste my time in speaking to you; but the greater influence you have shows that you are the better man. Now I rely upon you to use your influence, all your influence, in stopping this demonstration. Hold as many meetings as you like, let there be as many speeches as you can cram into an evening, but let it be done quietly; and I promise you, on my word of honour, I shall make it a personal matter to get that Act repealed next session. Is this a bargain?"

"The word 'bargain' is rather unfortunate, I should venture to say," said Harrick, who was still puzzled how to explain this proposal.

"Not in the sense I used it," replied Lord Burgos. "I would not have dared to insult you by proposing a bargain of a mercenary character. I mean a mere compact. I think I am not far wrong in saying that, privately, you don't approve of this disturbance of order?"

"That's perfectly true," said Harrick, almost before he knew what admission he was making; "but——" he hesitated.

"But," repeated the Earl, laying his gloved hand on Harrick's arm, "I think I can interpret

your thoughts. You are partly pledged to this movement. If you change your mind suddenly, on my private promise, which, if made public I would not confirm, you calculate what guarantee you would have that I would keep that promise. Is that not so?"

"Very nearly," said Harrick smiling, and admiring the handsome and aristocratic features of the nobleman. "That is the English of it."

"You have nothing except my word," said the Earl proudly, "but I know how to keep my word as well as I know how to keep silent. You have committed an injudicious act in giving shelter to that poor wretch Petrel, but I honour your motive, and the secret shall remain your own."

Their eyes met for an instant. Harrick's face was as of stone; his glance searching and severe. The nobleman's face, notwithstanding his efforts to control it, betrayed a sensation of amused triumph.

"I do not altogether understand you, my lord. You mention a strange circumstance, which——"

"I only mentioned it to show you that I know more about you than you think. You have taken a man of the name of Petrel into your house. He was the signalman whose negligence caused the Thamestone Junction accident. Is this not so?"

"I scarcely know what answer to make," said Harrick, frowning.

"Then make none," said the Earl. "The act, though generous, was injudicious, for it is interfering with the administration of the law, and is apt to bring you into difficulty. But I have already said that I honour your motive, and if you should want any assistance in this matter you may apply to me. Now, Mr. Harrick, I must go. During the last hour I have come to respect you, as a man of talent. You have the welfare of the people at heart. So have I. We may work out a common plan and be allies; and the greatness of our object is well worthy the abandoning of a few crotchets. Shall it be so?"

"I promise you, that I shall do all I can to stop this demonstration. Whether I shall succeed is another matter."

"I am sure you will. Good-bye. You will find your drawings in the library. Show this gentleman into the library."

Turning to the footman who stood at a respectful distance, the Earl gave this direction, and entering his carriage was whirled away rapidly. Harrick gazed after him for a moment, and mechanically turning round, walked thoughtfully through the ante-chamber and the small drawing-room, and passed through the open library door, scarcely knowing whither he went.

CHAPTER X.

THE DESIGN.

AFTER the guests had departed in the somewhat hurried manner already described, Eugenie had remained alone with Lord Ryan and the Earl. It was evident that neither of them was quite content with the issue of the meeting, and Lord Burgos, especially, seemed much annoyed. Eugenie had remained in her seat, busy with her work.

"I am afraid, Mrs. Fairfax," said the Earl, "that you were not much edified with the proceedings of this afternoon?"

"On the contrary," said she, without looking up, "I was much interested, and I cannot help thinking that it has been of some use."

"Indeed!" said the Earl; "it seemed to me that we parted in a state of more determined opposition than when we met."

"So you did, I think," replied Eugenie, shaking her head, "and I can easily see where the mistake lies. You came here for the purpose of receiving

their submission, but you were not prepared to submit or forego anything yourself."

"Mrs. Fairfax," said the Earl, earnestly, and in a low voice, "I came here in the humblest possible spirit. I came here hoping that I might perhaps be able to gain that which I know I do not deserve—which I never was so sensible of not having deserved."

"Then it would be very unjust if you got it," said she, laughing.

"But it would be generous," said he; "it would be a generosity worthy of the noblest and most beautiful woman in England."

"Has this been as carefully rehearsed as most of your speeches?" said she, looking at him with a curve of disdain on her lips. "I am afraid you will be too late for your committee if you stay any longer—now," she added, with the faintest tinge of colour.

"I have no interests or ambitions that equal this," said he, rising, and lingering for an instant in the hope of one word of encouragement.

She let him go without that word, but for a moment, as their eyes met, the Earl fancied that her look was not one of total indifference. He was right. No woman in the world can ever be so addressed, without looking upon the man who so addresses with kindlier feeling.

The Earl left the room so hastily that he was

gone before his departure was noticed by Lord Ryan, who was at the other end, searching for a book. He was roused from his reading by a gay little laugh of his daughter, and on looking up found her approaching him with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes and her hands behind her.

"There, my wise monitor, so much for your sage counsels. Did you not warn me not to fly what you called a Blue Peter?"

"I said you should not fly one unless you were in want of a pilot."

"Well then, sir, what if, notwithstanding my utter want of signals of any kind, a most determined pilot should have been so bold and so hazardous as to venture—yes, sir, absolutely to venture?"

Lord Ryan sank his book and raised his eyebrows, and looked at the lovely woman, who blushingly nodded what she would not say.

"My dear," said he gravely, "I need not tell you that I had not expected—that I had not the slightest notion of anything of the kind; in fact, you know I thought that from the way you had treated him, he had given up every such intention."

"But you see he has not," said she pouting; "and you talk about my treating him as if I were a doctor. I never treated him, and I never shall; and I shall never again listen to your counsels. No, sir, I shall in future assume this

article at my own discretion, and make it as big, and as hideous, and as forbidding as any decent milliner can be found to make it. There, sir, what do you think of that?"

So saying, the lady of the house turned to a Venetian glass, and quickly arranged the widow's cap among her locks, if possible, with more bewitching effect than before, and then with a sudden impulse threw her arms round her father's neck and kissed him. Lord Ryan once more dropped his book and raised his eyebrows; for, affectionate and warm as his daughter had always been, these demonstrations had ceased almost entirely since her marriage. Her love had been as tender, but she had become somewhat grave and staid, and it was but seldom that he ventured to do more than touch her forehead with his lips. He was, therefore, somewhat puzzled.

"I have no objection to your wearing this, my pet," said he, stroking her long hair; "but it would be better if it were visible—say an inch or two inches broader, and not quite so tasteful. It's nothing as it is now."

"I shall have it made like a Quakeress," said she, releasing him and tripping towards the other end of the room; "and I shall practise a most forbidding frown with it, and proclaim to all the world that I never, never, never mean to change my condition."

"It would be difficult to say what your condition is at this moment," said Lord Ryan, looking after her, and marvelling at her unwonted light-heartedness and gaiety. "It's my firm opinion, that like all other women, you would change your condition for a better."

"I could not imagine a better one," said she, taking up a scroll of paper that was lying on a chair, "unless I took the chair at a meeting in St. James's Hall, and became an orator. Oh, how beautiful this is! Oh, how lovely! I wonder what it can be?"

Lord Ryan this time put away his book, and going towards his daughter, looked over her shoulder at the drawing which she was holding up. He saw at a glance that it was an original idea, not without many faults, but expressing an amount of thought and feeling which he had scarcely expected in the work of a mere English artist. It was a sketch for a relief representing a lofty palm tree at the foot of which a kneeling maiden supported on her bosom the drooping head of a fawn which had been wounded in the chase. One arm was thrown caressingly round the slender neck, the other hand bathed the wound. Over the outline of the rock, in the background, there appeared the head of a tiger.

The sound of Harrick's footsteps interrupted their silent admiration. She looked up and saw

the young artist, who had overheard her exclamation, and was hesitating whether to advance or retire.

"This is yours," said the lady, looking kindly at him.

"I forgot to take it with me," muttered Harrick, "and you will excuse me entering so strangely, but the servant—at least—I thought—"

"Oh pray," said she, with that peculiar, half-melancholy smile. "I am very glad to have had the opportunity of admiring so beautiful a design. May I ask what it is intended for? I can almost guess."

"It is a design for a memorial slab in some church, in memory of a young lady, I believe, who caught a fatal disease while nursing a poor child."

"It may want some alterations," said Lord Ryan, examining it with the eye of a connoisseur, "but the idea is not bad, and if it is your own, I compliment you on it."

"It is not altogether my own," answered Harrick. "I have been assisted, but the idea is mine."

"You are honest, at any rate," said Lord Ryan, "and I should like to see some more of your work. I am sorry that our meeting should have come to so abrupt an end; but Mr. Kennedy was really getting too excited. I am afraid he is a

violent man, and if you hope to do any good, you should take care not to ally yourself too closely with him. He will drag you into treacherous sloughs."

"Mr. Harrick, I am sure, will never forsake the moderation he has shown to-day," said Eugenie. "You have spoken nobly," she continued, handing him his drawing, "and it would grieve us all to see you leading others into a danger which you cannot estimate."

Harrick accepted the scroll silently, and with trembling hand. The few words, spoken so gently, brought the blood to his cheeks. He bowed, and, with a bounding heart, withdrew.

CHAPTER XI.

HOPE.

THE situation in which Warren Harrick found himself was one which might have puzzled more experienced heads than his, and for some days he scarcely knew what precise course to take. He had hitherto advocated demonstration, as a legal means of expressing popular sentiment, but he had never been blind to the fact that it was something more. From his intimate knowledge of foreign capitals he knew that a demonstration on anything like so large a scale would be certain to begin by arousing resentment, and probably end by producing violence. That such a result was not to be immediately apprehended in the British metropolis, was, he knew, owing as much to the moderation of the upper as of the working classes, and he felt that it might not only be expedient but necessary for the Government to oppose by force a large and dangerous gathering. At the same time, he saw that on a great emergency the popular leaders might think it their duty to resist by force such

a prohibition, since it had been acknowledged to be their undoubted right. The question was, had such emergency arisen? he thought not. At the same time, galled as he was by the contract that held him in bondage, it had been the dream of his latter days to get free and break the bond. But he began to feel also that any measure, unless perfect, would leave him much as before. It was a hard struggle, but he came to look upon himself as a representative case, and to acquiesce in the policy of waiting, until next session.

He firmly believed the promise that had been given him by Lord Burgos, and he also firmly believed the declarations of Lord Daintry and Sir Richard Steele, that the Government were determined to prohibit and obstruct any large demonstration. If they persisted in their plan, a collision was inevitable, and he knew that a collision would bring no good results. Long and anxious were the deliberations of the central committee, and strenuous was Harrick's opposition to the plan. Having thought out the matter for himself, he was the more able to answer the arguments of those who could only think in common, and he was gratified to find that slowly but surely his counsels were prevailing. Never had he been so active, never had his brain been so clear and rapid in its working, never had he been so happy in his speech.

The Lords had met for the discussion of the Bill, but it was apparent from the first that its fate was doomed. The noble earl who introduced it was feeble in its praise, and the noble marquis who supported it was painfully elaborate, and seemed to speak in hexameters. A dozen amendments, at least, were put forward by younger men, who were somewhat deficient in practice; but it was remarked by all that the best members of the House were silent. Lord Burgos was in his seat the first night, but paired with Lord Daintry at every subsequent division. Lord Ryan watched the debate throughout, but when he rose it was only to say a few words in opposition to one of the amendments which had been quoted as coming from him.

When the debate had been adjourned three times, it became plain to the central committee of the Great Brotherhood that their time for decisive action had come. Kennedy, who had set his heart upon the demonstration, was beyond measure incensed at the manner in which Harrick's more moderate counsels prevailed; and as a last effort he summoned a meeting of the sub-committees throughout London, who, by the constitution of the Brotherhood, had the power of finally deciding upon any great question. But Harrick had been before him. Kennedy summoned the meeting for Saturday following the conference,

but during the week Harrick had taken the trouble to visit three of the principal sub-committees in Hoxton, Mile End, and Somers-town, and he became convinced that the great majority of the members were neither in the mood for a strike nor looked upon the prospect of a collision in the streets with any confidence of ultimate success.

When the sub-committees met, Harrick's tone was one of assurance, for he knew the spirit of his audience, and he felt that magic impulse that made him express in pregnant language what they thought.

"That we shall obtain the repeal of these obnoxious laws, sooner or later, is a certainty to which we may all look forward," said he, in the course of his speech; "but I ask you seriously to consider whether our condition is, after all, so unbearable. We have gone on pretty well, notwithstanding this badge of slavery, and we need not deny it amongst ourselves that we only pay such attention to it because we have nothing else that is worse. When this point has been gained, we are a step further, but only a step. In a few years some other inequality or restriction will occupy our attention, as these laws have occupied the attention of our fathers. Is it, then, not our duty to remember that as we follow precedents set by them, our children will follow the precedents set by us; and if we begin by paralyzing trade for other than trade

purposes, and if we take to gigantic demonstrations in order to overcome a feeble opposition, if we sail within an inch of riot to procure peace, and fly to the last resource of an oppressed race, while boasting that we are the freest people under the sun, I ask you, are we not endangering our own future, and likely to lose that moderation which alone has given us our present freedom? I am convinced that next session another and better measure must be ably supported in the Lords, and we, who are still deficient in organization, and not thoroughly prepared with a plan by which we can stand and fall, will consult our own interests best by agitating the question during the recess, and holding a series of public meetings that will enlighten not only ourselves but our legislators."

Notwithstanding the exertions of Kennedy and his party, the majority of the Brethren of Labour had gradually come to the conclusion that the time for the demonstration had gone by for the present, and the motions for the strike and the demonstration were rejected. Thus in the midst of life's turmoil, with the battle waging hotly around him in all directions, Harrick found himself a leader of men, conscious of his strength and of his growing knowledge; of deeper insight, and of more extended sympathies. His step was elastic, his carriage erect, his eye shone with a steady fire.

And yet when these periods of excitement were over, he would frequently lapse into a state of gloom and despondency, that made him another being. Ververt watched him in silence. He dimly guessed that the young artist threw himself with such energy into the political struggle to shut out other thoughts that lingered in his mind. He saw how he entered with the same fierce energy into whatever work he had in hand, and became entirely absorbed in it. And when he paused with the tools in his hand for an instant, an expression of strange sweetness would pass over his face; but, as if ashamed to be found dreaming, he would shake off his reverie, and plunge into work. When he had done the task which he conscientiously set himself, he no longer indulged in talks and discussions with Ververt, or the rest of the workmen, as he was wont to do; but he took to drawing models or answering letters with silent determination, as if he had to compress a week's work into a day.

It was the struggle of a strong mind with itself; it was the curb of a powerful will applied to desires that could not be fulfilled. He was like a good rider, who has mounted a wayward steed, and who gives up his whole strength and mind to subdue its refractory spirit. Ever since he had returned from the continent he had kept up cor-

respondence with the leaders of the proletariat in the different capitals, and it was one of his pleasures to keep himself informed of details, not only on the continent, but in Great Britain. Having a marvellous readiness for composition, he was often secretly asked by secretaries of local unions or organisers of strikes to assist them, and with the help of Harry Mivor he had responded to many of these calls. Within the last few days he had done more than ever, but it seemed to bring no relief. He remained silent, and Ververt noticed that he sighed frequently, that his laugh was never heard, and his smile but seldom seen.

He went about the yard with unwonted gravity, and for those who consulted him he had none but short, and frequently cutting answers. To Lizzie alone, he was ever gentle and kind. Hitherto her work had been crowned with the most encouraging success. The place was no longer the same. Discontent in that short time had died out, the men were prompt at their work in the morning, they were respectful, well-behaved, and quick at their meals, and they were accumulating a considerable portion of the sum that was calculated to be necessary for the acquisition of the little house next door. Lizzie, too, had found the work by no means so difficult as she imagined. She still kept up the fiction at home, that she had

found employment at a dress-maker's; and as she had already brought her mother two sovereigns, that honest lady was not disposed to find fault with the very early hour at which she was obliged to leave.

But even this seemed to have lost its attraction for Harrick. He treated Lizzie with gentle kindness, and whenever she wanted advice he gave it; but he was seldom seen in the house, and when he came to the table to take his meals, he very frequently left them untouched, and rose long before the others. This had been going on for more than a week, and Ververt had shaken his head and muttered "*Nom de nom*," very many times, when Harrick came in one morning, and gave him a silent nod. It was early; the majority of Londoners were preparing to go to their day's work, but London was languid. The day was hot and sultry. A gloomy curtain obscured the sky. The great city lay like a giant who is faint with heat, and who is struggling in vain to throw off a net that has been cast around him.

The skylight of the hut had been opened. The curtain was drawn, water had been sprinkled on the stones and floor, and a slight breeze fluttered in from the river. The studio was cool and pleasant, and at other times the light-hearted Harrick would have commenced a song, or tried to give Ververt proof positive of his superior

strength, before settling down to work. But this day he was silent. He changed his coat for the linen blouse, put on his little skull-cap, and sat down in front of his task with compressed lips and contracted brow. He worked for a short time mechanically, and then threw down his tools with disgust. He sighed heavily, and leaned his burning forehead against the cold stone without finding relief.

"Oh," he murmured at last, bitterly, "I am a clod. A miserable, hopeless, worthless clod."

"Come here, *mon garçon*," said Ververt, with kindly voice. "You must have a talk with me."

"A talk will do me no good, Ververt. I am a hopeless fool. My hands are as clumsy as a brick-layer's."

"Poor fellow!" said Ververt, shaking his head as a father might, "it is not your hands, but your head. I always told you that your hands are quick enough, but you play what you call '*old Henri*' with your brain. You will go preaching like a parson, and you will go mad like an *évêque*."

"No, it is not that, Ververt. I have only plunged into work, and busied myself in this fashion, because I wanted to conquer a rising tempest within me. But it is no use."

"A rising tempest! *Alors*, you have been what you call in the spree?"

"Bah," said Harrick, with disgust. "I have been in the whirl of life to find peace. You remember telling me one day that my mind wanted a great teacher—sorrow?"

"I said it wanted two great teachers—love and sorrow—and you look as if you had found one of them at least. *Vous êtes amoureux, mon ami.*"

"What would you say if you were suddenly assailed by all the demons of ridicule," asked Harrick, pacing up and down; "if you began to laugh at your own dreams, and looked with disgust upon your holiest and purest idols? Oh, Ververt, if this goes on it will drive me mad!"

"These moods will come," said the Gaul, gravely, "and they will go. Take a long walk."

"I have walked all night," said Harrick; "and a gleam of hope shot across me this morning as the sun rose. But it is gone, and here I stand, before this figure of Hope like a clod."

"You are not what you call a clod, *mon ami*. You are a brick."

"I have argued with myself," said Harrick, "and I have wrestled with these demons, but they always get the better of me, and turn everything into horrible and disgusting ridicule. Yet, Ververt, there must be something good in me. You, who have been to me like a father, who looked after me in Belleville when I was only fourteen, who trained me in many ways that I did not see, who followed

me to Rome and watched me amidst the works of the masters—in all these years that we have been together, that you have seen me grow, tell me, have you seen any signs of talent in me—of genius?”

“There was a time when I thought so,” answered Ververt; “but lately you have given yourself up too much to what you call tom-folly. *Prenez-garde*, you must curb yourself and plod, and not always run after ideas. You will do as I did—begin to work, dream, break off, begin another, and a third—all dreams, all unfinished. *Et me voilà*.”

“I have an idea now,” said Harrick, while with a smile he sketched a head. “That cast of Hope is ridiculous.”

“What is wrong with it? What is the fault?”

“It is gross and earthly, and Hope is not.”

“*Comment*, Hope is not earthly? And I always hear people talk of their earthly hope. She is altogether earthly and *matériel*.”

“*My* Hope is not,” said Harrick, while gazing upon his drawing and shading it. “She is sweet, and lovely, and ethereal.”

Ververt the ancient, struck by the tone, rose from his seat, and silently approached the young artist, whom he loved as his own son. When he saw what form the ethereal goddess had assumed under the artist’s crayon, a smile half of admiration,

half of pity, came upon his withered lips, and he shook his grey head.

"Is this a creation of your own brain, Warren?" said he, laying his hand on the other's shoulder.

"The truly beautiful is never a creation of our brain," said Harrick philosophically. "Art can only study and modify nature."

"And you have studied nature?" said Ververt. "You seek a goddess amidst the gross and sinful daughters of man."

Harrick winced. "Your jest is bitter," said he, with a glow in his eyes. "Remember there are thirty years' difference between us. If this be gross and sinful—if this be earthly—show me where, and I shall wipe out the lines."

"There," said Ververt, taking the crayon and deepening the shade round the lower jaw. "A shade more, and it becomes brutal."

"A shade less, and it becomes rigid and resolute as this stone," said Harrick, wiping out the addition. "I prefer it as it is—sweet, pure, and exalted; lofty minded, yet not too high for earth. Hope should not be."

"*Vraiment*, this is very beautiful," said Ververt, gazing upon it. "You are making progress. You have studied nature well."

"I never said this was nature," said Harrick hastily, "except that it may be what I have remarked in half-a-dozen faces;" and he began

filling out the hair, allowing it to flow in rippling tresses from the broad forehead.

"The expression is too settled for an imagination," said Ververt. "*Décidément c'est une femme ça.* Where have you seen her?"

"What an inquisitor you are," said Harrick, colouring and laughing. "I saw her at Lord Ryan's. Some high lady. His daughter, I think."

"What is her name?"

"I don't know; Miss Ryan, I suppose, unless that was a widow's cap she wore. Will this do for Hope?"

"Ah, that is a question a little difficult," answered Ververt. "She may do for Hope—*Mais elle vous trompera.*"

"I shall model it at any rate," said Harrick, "Hope or not."

CHAPTER XII.

HOPE SHATTERED.

"BEECHAM ABBEY, *June* — 187—.

"MY DEAREST EUGENIE,

"I feel so agitated and shocked that I scarcely know how to tell you, in a few words, what occupies my every thought. My happiness is gone. The serene tranquillity in which I lived has been cruelly disturbed; the terror, the dreadful feeling of persecution which was upon me when you gave me shelter, has returned. I suppose it is necessary that my little darling Maud should be taken away, for even she will leave me, and I stand again alone in the world, without anyone to love me and comfort me. I beseech you, withdraw not your hand. Send me some slight token of your affection, for I feel very sad and lonely, and I could cry all day and all night, only that I know that it would make things very much worse, and pain our good kind Doctor.

"You will have seen from the diary I sent you, that my life has been very strangely mixed up with that of a man, whom I cannot now consider anything but base and contemptible. He must know full well by this time that I do not love him, and that I could not love him if I would, and yet he persists in persecuting me and troubling me, for what reason I will not guess. Soon after my arrival at Beecham, Dr. Plumper tells me he received a visit from a strange gentleman, who had made very particular inquiries about me, and seemed anxious to ascertain where I was. The Doctor would give him no information whatever, and pretended complete ignorance. The stranger said he was a solicitor in London, and that he believed I had come into a large fortune; but when the Doctor told him that all my business was transacted by himself, this strange solicitor volunteered no further information, and went away, using a good many more quotations of poetry, and expressions of respect and gratitude than a solicitor would be likely to use.

"Uncle discovered afterwards that the same man had tried to pick up information about me in the village, but as I had come at night, and on foot, and entered Beecham Park as a lady-companion should, without being noticed by anyone except Mrs. Parker, and Douglas and Andrew, and we have but little intercourse with the village, of

course nobody knew anything about me at the time. For three years I was left alone. I had almost forgotten that dreadful time in Paris, and was thanking Heaven every day for the blessed rest, when Dr. Plumper's strict orders to Andrew, the other day, not to let me go out of the park, brought back that strange fear, and tremor of my heart, which I thought I had lost. I found the Doctor and Andrew in conversation the other night, and when I interrupted them, I saw they were talking about me. I insisted on knowing what was the matter. Fancy, my dear Eugenie, my horror at hearing that this same man had been here again, and came into the church while I was playing the organ.

"He was dressed like a gentleman farmer, and he managed to get Andrew into conversation about the park and the house and the beauties of Beecham; so that Andrew took him to be a gentleman who had bought a house in the neighbourhood. Then he spoke of the Fairfax family, which he seemed to know very well, and of you; and he said he had had the honour of being entertained by you in London only the other day, and that you had invited him to go over the house as soon as he returned to the country. He had gone there, being very anxious to see some of the old portraits, but had been denied by the housekeeper. He then asked a great many questions about who was

playing. Andrew foolishly said it was a young lady who was stopping at the house, but would answer no more questions. When the stranger left he gave Andrew what he thought was a sixpence, but which turned out to be half a sovereign, and said he hoped he would be able to get him into the house some day—promising to return next evening.

“Andrew consulted the Doctor, and it was arranged that the stranger was to be told, when he came back, that he could see part of the house next day. He returned the night before last, while I was playing, you may imagine with what little pleasure, and, having given another golden sixpence, he promised to come next day. He came, and as he was being shown the armoury I looked through one of the curtained doors and studied his face, which I am now certain I never saw before. But something moved me to hear his voice. I turned the key noiselessly, opened the door a quarter of an inch, and applied my ear. Andrew was speaking, the stranger listened. I had not gained much. Suddenly I heard him say quite close to me, ‘And where does this door lead to?’ ‘To the private apartments,’ says Andrew. ‘And can’t I see them to-day? Can’t I have a peep at them?’” said the stranger, stepping to the door, and putting his hand on the knob.

“I had nearly screamed out. The blood flew to

my brain at that instant—for the voice was very well known to me. I heard it that night of my escape, when poor Petrel helped me so bravely. I had presence of mind enough to remain absolutely silent, and it was lucky the door opened on my side, for by putting my foot against it I could keep it firm against the pressure that was applied on the other side. ‘You can’t get into the private apartments, sir,’ said Andrew, ‘because my lady has given strict orders to the contrary; and, besides, the doors are locked.’ ‘Oh, but this door is not locked, I assure you,’ said the voice, with another and firmer pressure. ‘It must be,’ said Andrew, seizing the door roughly and pulling it with as much noise and rattling as he could. I understood his meaning, and at the same instant turned the key in the lock. I could watch the stranger’s face distinctly through a small hole in the curtain, although I was trembling all over, and I shall never forget his smile of mortification and amusement as he tried the door and really found it locked. He lingered about for some time, and then went away with many apologies and thanks. Dr. Plumper saw him as he went out, and recognizes him as the man who visited him three years ago, and called himself a solicitor.

“There, my dear, is my story. What am I to do? You will, of course, send orders that nobody is to be admitted into the park under any circum-

stances, for I could not see that man again ; it would kill me. Dr. Plumper says he will take me to the seaside, until we all go to Italy, and he thinks it best to transfer Maud at once, in order to accustom her to the change. We thought of a boarding-school first, but the other day he had a visit from an old schoolfellow of his, Mr. Sutton, who brought his wife down to spend a day with him ; and Mrs. Sutton, who has no children of her own, was so delighted with my little darling, and Maud liked Mr. Sutton so much, that Dr. Plumper promised the kind old lady that she might be allowed to take care of her while we were away, and he is actually wanting to start to-morrow morning.

“The little puss is lying in my bed. She has cried herself to sleep, and is still sobbing, with a big tear on each cheek ; but I suppose it is better. Mr. Sutton, I believe, is a very kind man. He is at present staying in London, but he is steward, or manager, or something, of a very large estate not far from Thamestone. Perhaps you know him, and may see my little darling ; if so, give her ten thousand kisses from me. I shall be quite alone now—and I sometimes sigh and think it is very hard that somebody does not come and claim me. But probably he has been told all these wicked stories about me, and thinks it is not worth his while—but surely he might come and hear an explanation

from my own lips. Ah me! perhaps it is better so. I might dislike him very much, and that would be infinitely worse. Will you not leave smoky London for a few days, and come to have a look at the church and the plans that we have found, and have a chat with your lonely

“ KATHERINE.”

Scarcely had Eugenie finished this letter, after a somewhat late breakfast, when the servant announced, in a whisper, that Dr. Plumper was in the drawing-room. Eugenie threw a hasty look in the glass and round the room, and finding everything to her liking, the Doctor was shown up-stairs.

“ You surprise me in the midst of my London shortcomings,” said she, advancing towards him with a smile.

“ I know how early you are at Beecham, my dear Mrs. Fairfax,” said the silver-haired visitor, looking with admiration at the graceful woman. “ No morning hour is too late, and this is a morning hour, therefore——”

“ I knew you were coming,” said Eugenie, pointing to a seat by her side. “ I have just read this letter. Read it.”

Dr. Plumper read it, and shook his head. “ Poor Kate!” sighed he; “ she has had much sorrow already.”

"I have lately learned a good deal of her history," said Eugenie; "for she sent me a sort of compressed account of the principal portion of it, and I sympathize with her deeply. Who can this Stafford be, who so determinedly pursues her?"

"I have no idea," said the Doctor; "but he must be very wealthy and very cunning. I have never seen him."

"And have you never seen this Blainville—this husband of Katherine's?"

"Never. The marriage, you know, took place suddenly in Edinburgh, and when I heard of it, it was too late. Kate was my sister's child, and I often offered to take charge of her altogether; but my sister's second husband was, in the latter part of his life, a bad man. He kept her at home after her mother's death, with some after-thought, which I am afraid was little short of diabolical. The Evil One makes use of weak and heartless men; her step-father was weak and heartless; therefore——" and the Doctor took a pinch of snuff.

"And you are quite certain the marriage is valid? Could not desertion be proved?"

"As for the validity of the marriage, that is beyond doubt," returned he. "I went to Scotland on purpose to try and get it annulled; but they were both of legal age, and the man who married

them perfectly empowered. As for desertion—that's the great difficulty. You know at that time I was travelling in Norway. I did not hear of Mr. Bell's death until my return, at the same time that I received a letter from her, scribbled in a hurry in Paris, saying that she would fly to me for protection. I have heard the account of that journey from her own lips, and I believe she is as spotless as the driven snow—God bless her! but the story looks ugly, and who knows how it may have been told to the unfortunate young man who is linked to her for life? She will take no step in the matter."

"But is it not monstrous that she should be tied to a man she does not know and does not care for?"

"As to that, she has never had a chance to do either, my dear madam," said he. "It is my firm conviction that she will see him first before she decides, and I can't blame her. I never saw him, but I was told that he was then a handsome, quick, intelligent boy. He is now travelling about the continent somewhere, for he ran away from school in Antwerp, but where, nobody knows. The danger seems to be this, that with her affectionate disposition she may become attached to some stranger, and he to her; and this would render both unhappy."

"And you have brought Maud up to town

without bringing her here?" said Eugenie, after a moment's pause.

"I beg your pardon, but I thought it better to take her straight to her new home, not knowing whether you were to be seen at so early an hour. She talks of nothing but dear Aunt Eugenie, poor little thing! I was sorry to take her away, but I think it was best. Such an excellent opportunity, you know."

"I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Sutton," said Eugenie, with a touch of coldness, but if they take her to Genthorpe she will be in a beautiful and healthy place. I understand, however, that Mr. Sutton is going to leave Genthorpe, as he can't agree with the new owner."

"Nobody knows who the new owner is," said the Doctor, "and Sutton is certainly looking out for another occupation, in case they might not agree. But I believe it would break his heart to leave the place. He has been there nearly all his life."

"And are you serious in your intention of taking Katherine to the seaside? Can you not wait a few weeks and we shall all go together? My father has discussed the Italian tour with you, of course?"

"I should be glad to wait," said he, "but I am afraid Katherine will be very lonely and sad. If I could only prevail upon you to come back

with me I should be delighted. You are looking still paler than when you left us, Mrs. Fairfax. London is doing you harm. The air is poisonous. All towns are unhealthy. London is the greatest of towns, therefore it's most unhealthy."

"I do long for the green country sometimes," said Eugenie, wearily; "but what can I do?"

"Break out of it. Come and help us to plan the restoration of the little church."

"I shall break out of it," said she, with a sudden gleam of pleasure. "I have thought over this plan of the church for some time, and I'll tell you what I will do. Listen and receive the commands of your queen. Go hence about your business, and return hither punctually at five. You will find the carriage ready to drive us to the 'Star and Garter' at Richmond for a nice, quiet dinner at the river-side, and as much of the country as we can get. I daresay my father can join us; at any rate we can drive through Lambeth, and call upon Mason and Co., who have been recommended to me, and ask them to send us down somebody who can make an estimate of the probable cost and the time. If it is not too dear we'll put it in hand at once, and I will come down every week to see it until the session is over. What do you say?"

"I obey your commands, my queen," said the Doctor, with a smile. "The obedience will be easy."

It would have been difficult not to obey on that hot afternoon, when the very thought of a cool room, with a view of the green leaves and placid stream, revived a flagging spirit. Lord Ryan could not absent himself from the House, for the great question was to be decided that day; but he promised to join them if he could leave in time. Thus Mr. Mason was honoured by the visit of Eugenie and Dr. Plumper only. The little excursion seemed to have revived her spirits wonderfully. She chatted, and teased the worthy old Vicar about Katherine, and laughed at his honest and elaborate defence, and altogether was so lively and charming that her companion came to the conclusion that London might poison a pretty woman, but it could not make her dull. The exhalations of the range of gasometers seemed to stimulate her more than ever, and she entered the gloomy office, tripping as lightly as a red robin over the snow.

"You see what we want, Mr. Mason?" said she. "You must send down somebody who knows his business."

"Certainly, madam," said Mr. Mason; "we have done this kind of thing very frequently. Step into this room, madam. Here you see are the plans of a portion of Middleton Parish Church restored, and here is Placeby-cum-Ware, one of the oldest Gothic remnants, entirely renovated."

"I am very curious to see some of your work, Mr. Mason," said Dr. Plumper, who had been inspecting some of the mouldings. "I caught a glimpse of your yard behind—have you anything in hand that is worth looking at, or are we not allowed to penetrate?"

"We shall be proud to show you," said Mr. Mason, in his hard, dry manner. "We have nothing very great in hand just now; but one of our men is doing a very neat little relief after Canova. We don't think he is there at present; but if you will follow us, you will see a good specimen of work."

Eugenie gathered her dress together, and walked between the rows of slabs and stones, looking here and there and everywhere, as if she had come into a new world, where everything and every creature was new and interesting. When she entered the hut, an old workman, with a grizzly beard, rose and made her a stately bow, which she returned graciously. The old man resumed his seat at his work, but his eyes followed her about with a strange intentness. She, not aware of his watching her, went round the walls, and, with the knowledge of one who is conscious of the difficulties of art, she scanned, condemned or admired the models and drawings, while Mr. Mason was elaborately explaining to Dr. Plumper the entire process of sculpturing, copying, and modelling.

"From what I know of art, and what I see on these walls, Mr. Mason, I should say that some of your workmen, as you call them, are men of real talent, if not genius," said the Doctor.

"Yes sir, yes," said Mason, drily, "we don't deny it. They want originality. That's all."

"I should say this man does not want originality," said the parson. "The moulding of that drapery, yonder, is very bold and striking. Is that his work?"

"Yes sir, that's his," replied Mason. "He is the best man we have—but it is a thousand pities that we can't get him to work regularly. He is a turbulent young demagogue, who is too fond of speechifying among those of his class, and he neglects his work sadly at times. We have often warned him."

"What's his name?" asked the Doctor.

"I daresay you have heard it before. Harrick—Warren Harrick."

There was a sound as of a fall. Eugenie uttered a sudden exclamation. Both men looked round. She was standing in the corner, with one hand clutching the shelf. Every drop of colour had left her cheeks; at her feet lay what had evidently been a cast of some bust, but was now a heap of fragments. Her other hand held a small scroll of paper.

"I am afraid I have done serious damage," said

she, attempting to smile, "I took a cast of some head in my hand, and dropped it."

"Oh, it does not matter, madam," said Mr. Mason. "We don't suppose it is of much consequence. Do you know what it was, Ververt?"

"It was a study which Harrick had made for the head of this figure of Hope, but it is not the one which he is going to use, so it does not matter."

"A study of Hope!" said the Doctor. "I should like to have seen that. I say, Mr. Mason, do you think you could send down this Mr. Warrick, or whatever his name is—that is if you are agreeable?"

"Could you not send some older man?" said Eugenie, "these demagogues are such queer creatures."

"Oh, we assure you, he is all that can be desired," said Mason, "he was the very man we thought of sending, and as a workman you will find him very quiet. He shall be down to-morrow. What address?"

"Oh, he had better go to Beecham station, and ask for Dr. Plumper. I'll show him the church, or if I should not come down, I'll send you the directions for him. Good day."

The carriage sped on towards Richmond, and rolled briskly through the splendid park, but the gaiety of Eugenie was gone. She gazed before

her in silence ; but upon her lips there lingered a smile, of which her companion would have known the meaning better if he could have seen how her little hand kept a tight hold of the scroll which belonged to the broken model.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TIDE IN HIS AFFAIRS.

As the dusk gathered about Lambeth that night, and the lamplighter wandered about like a will-o'-the-wisp, leaving his faint patches of light behind him, Harrick returned from an errand and approached the yard with rapid step. At the turning of the corner he ran up against the somewhat portly form of an individual dressed like a countryman, and who, with the good-humour of his class, took the trouble to make a profound apology. Harrick looked after him as he went, and pondered. He had seen that man several times before, and once or twice he thought in Mason's office. Who could he be, and what manner of man was he? He was puzzled, for, unaccountably to him, that man had on each occasion inspired him with a sort of dread. He was not given to nervousness or superstition, but nevertheless he thought it odd. And it was equally odd that on passing through the passage Mr. Mason should call him sharply

into the office. Each time that man had been there, Mason had been particularly hard, dry, and disagreeable; and by the way he called out, Harrick knew at once that at that moment he was, so to say, ultra-Masonic.

"We have told you some time ago that we intended sending you for a short period into the country," said the firm. "You had better prepare yourself to start to-morrow afternoon for Beecham, in Hopshire."

"I shall do no such thing," said Harrick curtly; "send somebody else down there."

"You will have to wait until we get instructions from Dr. Plumper," continued Mr. Mason, without paying attention to Harrick's words, and without looking up from the papers he was arranging; "but we have been looking at the trains, and find that by leaving at five you can get there at seven."

"I am not going, Mason," said Harrick savagely, leaning against the door. "I want to finish this relief first, and if you must send me you will have to wait till then."

"We don't know what sort of place it is," said the imperturbable firm; "but there will probably be a village close by, where you can stop. It is a smallish church that wants restoring, something Gothic or Tudor; but there seems plenty of money, so you can make a liberal estimate."

"Curse your liberal estimates!" said Harrick,

with a dark frown. "I hate and abominate them. I tell you, Mason, I am *not* going down there. I have made up my mind to finish this figure on the relief, and finish it I shall. If you insist, I'll go down and send up an estimate that'll ruin you."

"We have nothing more to say," said Mason, waving his hand. "You have heard our order, and we shall tell you to-morrow what time to leave."

"Are you mad?" said Harrick, growing calm. "I tell you I shan't go. This has lasted long enough, and it is time it came to an end. You have not only got me tied down, but you rattle the chains in my ears, and drag me where you know I refuse to go. Let the worst come now—I'll break them."

"You can't, Harrick. You know you can't. You thought you would get loose this year, but you have worked harder than anybody to defeat your liberation."

"Not defeat, but postpone," said the artist, sternly; "but I am tired of it, and I shall wait no longer. I must make a stand somewhere. I make it here. I refuse to go."

"Very well. You have worked very hard at your brotherhood, and we daresay you require some rest. A week in prison may do you good. But you'd better go to Beecham. It's nicer there."

"You have threatened me," said Harrick, advancing towards the firm. "You have dared to speak to me of prison—you hound. By God! I'll go. I'll have it out with you. Take me to the magistrate to-morrow, and let it be settled."

"Don't you come so close to us, like that," said Mr. Mason, slipping off his chair and round the desk, while he seized a big ruler. "We are masters here still, and not to be intimidated. We'll take you before Mr. Beeke if you like, though he is no friend of yours; but you won't get off like that, Harrick. You'll have to go to Beecham after you leave prison. It don't break the contract, you know. You'd better go quietly, and send us up a liberal estimate; and we'll allow you something for extra work."

"Oh, my God!" said Harrick, grinding his teeth. "If I could twist the law as I could twist his neck there would be an end of both."

He turned on his heel, and without another word left the office. In the passage his arm was seized by a shadowy substance, which he did not at first recognize.

"Wake up, old file," said the substance. "I've got some news to tell you, and thought I'd find you here."

"What is it?" said Harrick, gloomily. "I've no time to be bothered."

"Nobody has," said Mivor; "but I have just

come from the Lords, and it's all over. Burgos made the finest speech he ever made in his life, and recommended the shelving of the Bill, for a better one to be introduced next Session. It was prime."

"What did he say? Did he promise to bring in a Bill of his own."

"Oh, no. He didn't say much, now that I come to think of it; but it was intensely clever and interesting, and quite took the House. I say, when I start a paper I'll stick to that man. He's bound to pull a fellow through."

"And what about the Bill?" said Harrick, on whose lips a smile had not yet returned.

"Oh, of course it was negatived without a division. It was all over by tea-time—although, of course, that's a misnomer. At least when I become a lord I'll never drink tea. Have you heard about the Thamestone accident inquiry?"

"I have heard nothing to-day," said Harrick.

"Captain Worrit has issued a warrant for the apprehension of Petrel. I saw it at the office not half-an-hour ago, and I don't know what to do in the matter. I know where he is; and if I don't assist the law I am guilty of collusion. Five years, my boy! I say, this place don't smell as greasy and dirty as it used to, and it looks cleaner. I must see old Biddy for a moment."

"Biddy is gone," said Harrick, holding the

young reporter back as he was about to enter the kitchen. "We have a young lady there now who must not be interfered with. You can go in, if you like to go quietly."

"A young lady? Hallo, old file, what does that mean? The young lady what cleans the pots and pans? Not bad. I say, when I get married, I'll never let my wife do a stroke of work."

"If the wife you married consented to that," said Harrick, speaking through the open door, "she could not be like this young lady, for she has done a surprising number of strokes, and her kitchen smells like a dairy."

"That it does, old file," said Mivor, entering the kitchen and taking a good sniff. "Whoever is here knows how to do her work. I say," he continued in a whisper, pointing to the figure of a girl that was dimly visible at the other end of the huge kitchen, lit up by the gleams of a dying fire; "I say, that looks uncommonly like Lizzie in the distance; don't it, now? Can't you light the gas?"

"I will," said Harrick, while there was a suppressed titter in the other corner, "though our young lady manages her business so well that she cooks for the entire establishment, and gives us splendid dinners, and lets the fire go out just as the men go out; so that we want no gas, you see."

"Yes, I see ; that's very clever." (In a whisper.)
"She turns her head exactly like Lizzie, and she's got the same delicious little figure. Well, if you won't light the gas, I shall. By Jove, it is Lizzie!"

There was a merry peal of laughter from the young lady as the light shot up into the room ; when, no longer shy, but still in her neatest of white caps and aprons, she advanced and held out her hand.

"What the deuce is the meaning of this?" said Mivor slowly, looking from one to the other.

"Oh, fie, Harry," said his cousin, giving him a pat ; "why the workmen don't swear when I am here."

"That be blowed!" said Mivor. "But what *are* you doing here?"

"She is our little housekeeper," said Harrick, "and we are all as proud of her as we can be. You'd better behave yourself, or you'll have Ververt on to you."

"And you have had the impudence to let my cousin do the work of a cook," said Mivor, half in anger, half in doubt ; "you have let her degrade herself to a menial position."

"Come on, if you are a man," said Harrick, with mock defiance, and stretching forth his fist with an assumption of gaiety ; "come on, and answer me for that. She reigns supreme in the establishment. There is not a man here that would not leave his

day's work to do something for her. Isn't it so, Lizzie?"

"Oh, yes," said she, with tears in her bright eyes; "they are so very, very kind to me. They wouldn't have dared to say what Harry has said just now."

"Because they are not all your cousins," said Mivor. "As for Harrick, he is a rum file; I never know how he manages these things."

"With the three K's," said Harrick. "Ko-operation, Kindness, and Kommon-sense will bring you very far. Now I know you two are going to quarrel; so I'll leave you for a moment, to see Ververt, and then we'll walk home together."

He left the kitchen, and crossed the yard to the hut. In a moment his face had resumed the hard and determined expression it wore when he left Mason, and it grew even more determined as he opened the door to have another look at the model of the head that had been in his mind all the time. There was light in the hut, for Ververt liked pottering about after dark by himself, and he spent many hours smoking his pipe and sitting, thinking, amidst the stones. He had carefully swept away the pieces of the broken model, but he had heard Harrick's footsteps and he fixed a searching eye upon the door, knowing that Mason must have spoken to him. A look at the face told him as much as he cared to know.

"Ververt, is this your doing?" asked Harrick, with knitted brow.

"*Non, mon ami.* It is what you call a clean accident."

"Where is the model of that head?"

"I am sorry to say it is broken."

"Who broke it?"

"It is again what you call a clean accident."

"I am in bad luck to-day," muttered Harrick.

"*Pas du tout,*" said Ververt, quietly; "it was not perfect, and you must take another look. But you must take a good look, and you must leave this till you have what you call master the face."

"Leave this?" said Harrick. "You strange man. One day you tell me to throw off my bondage, and throttle my employer, next day you tell me to quietly do his bidding. I'm in for it now. I have refused to go away, and I have defied him. I mean to stick to it, and have it out with him."

Ververt shook his head.

"There is a tide in the affairs of man," continued Harrick, folding his arms across his broad chest, "which leads us either to good or bad fortune. I am convinced that my tide has come. Whither it will lead me I don't care; but I will take it at the flood. You continue to shake your head! Don't you think it has come?"

"I do, most *décidément*; but I do not think you

are taking it properly. What is your objection to the little trip in the country?"

"What is my objection?" said Harrick. "Why, I am dead sick and tired of being ordered about on business I don't understand, and don't care for. You know I detest making out estimates, and I detest all about churches. You scolded me for not sticking to this relief. Now that I have a good idea I mean to stick to it. Besides, I don't care to leave London at present. I shall refuse. Mason can do what he likes."

"Pardon, *mon ami*," said Ververt slowly, and enveloping himself, like an oracle, in a dense cloud, "but you are what you call up in a tree. This is a business of great importance, and may make you a great name, for the old *curé* is an amateur of art, and there will be some very good work to do. Beside, you know perfectly well that the old rogue in there can compel you to go to the place; and it will do you good. The great affair will be decided in the Peers this evening, and you have no reason to keep in London. You can make a name. *Voyons allez vous en.*"

"And I have been defying Mason to do his worst," said Harrick, hesitatingly.

"*Nom de nom!*" cried the Gaul, "you could soil your mind with so mean an idea as that? You go, and do your best."

"And I had made up my mind to work hard," said Harrick, with his head sunk upon his chest. "I had resolved to make up for lost time, and for the absence of what you call your great teachers."

"*Nom de nom*," cried Ververt again, getting off his perch and walking towards Harrick, with a twinkle in his eyes; "it is not by sticking *chez vous* that you get your teachers. They are everywhere; you are more likely to get them there than here."

"And I?" said Harrick with a smile; all unconscious of the secret meaning. "I have a sudden idea that you are right, Ververt, and that a few days in the country would do me no harm. You know I have never been in the country much—never more than a day; and I wonder what effect this will have."

"Very good," said Ververt, slapping him on the back; "go off—what you call cut your hook, and you will come back with new experience and fresh idea."

"What's to be done with poor Petrel?" said Warren, dismissing the topic from his mind. "Mivor tells me that there is a warrant out against him."

"What you call that—a warrant out against him?"

"The police are after him, because they say he caused the accident."

"Is he still very bad? Has he not recover yet?"

"No, he is still unconscious, and raving occasionally, though the doctor gives hope of a speedy recovery. But if he is taken to prison he will die; and I can't keep him with me, because J. F. blabs."

"That is a bad business. Can't you send him to a hospital?"

"He would never stop there. I only want him kept quiet until he is better, and able to think."

"If we could manage to transport him, we could put him up easily here, without anybody knowing it. There are two or three airy rooms below that none of the men know. He might be there, and Lizzie would look after him. *Hein?* what you say?"

"I shall make arrangements to have him conveyed here on the quiet," said Harrick. "Good-bye. I shall eat humble pie, and go, I think."

"Don't go alone," said Ververt; "take Barringer with you. He will be delighted, for he loves you."

"That's a good idea. Come on, Mivor; let us get home. We have got to finish that pamphlet for the fellows of Coalisle, you know."

"Yes, sir," said Mivor; "we'll give his lordship a wipe, we freeholders."

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARLEY.

Not unlike the fitful and rapid moods of a feverish and delirious brain, was the course of the train that conveyed Harrick and Barringer to their destination. The London and Hopshire Railway had always been a delirious sort of line. It had been built by bits; it had been upon the verge of collapse half a dozen times; it had obtained a new board of directors, who worked themselves and the public into another fever heat, and ended by adding another piece to that already existing. The line was now tolerably complete, and the trains, as a rule, kept pretty steadily to the rails; but its course was certainly most erratic. After leaving the smokiest and dullest of stations, it ran for a mile or so in a cutting, which, being covered with grass, and ornamented with bright medallions of flowers, looked fresh and smiling by the side of muddy and grimy walls. Then taking a plunge into a dark tunnel, it seemed suddenly lost in the depths of

despair; but presently issuing with a wild yell, it mounted exultingly above the house-tops, and sped along as if it would have mounted to the very clouds. Tunnels and house-tops, despair and exultation succeeded each other rapidly, with an occasional short interval of quiet, suburban park, and peaceful, placid homeliness.

The two men said but little. They were both occupied with their thoughts, nor were their moods unlike the course of this modern high road. Harrick was unsettled in mind, and somewhat exhausted in body. He felt instinctively that some days of rest in the country would do him good. Ever and anon, with the fragrant breath of summer, there would come rushing over him a feeling as if he would be happy at his work there; but then the gloomy feeling of defeat and repulse fell upon him like a pall. It was not that he disliked the work, but that he glowed with indignation at being compelled to submit to the dictates of a man like Mason, and to listen without power of retaliation to his vulgar and abominable threats.

Barringer, on the other hand, was full of life, and eager to quit the great city; but the peculiarity of his disposition and circumstances kept him also enveloped in gloom. The only pleasure he anticipated was Harrick's society; like all nervous and diffident men, he had a profound admiration for the calm and unhesitating energy of this son of toil.

It was only in his company that he began to think of life as worth having; and although he never could have equalled Harrick's vigorous thoughts, or his quick and just decisions, it was a strange pleasure to him to watch that mind at work, and contrast it with what he would have done, or thought, or said. When they alighted at the Beecham Station, they were told that the village was over two miles by road, that the new church stood right at the other end of the village, which was perhaps half a mile long, and that Dr. Plumper's parsonage stood by the side of the church. Yonder road led straight up to it; but if they liked to go through the stile, and follow the footpath through the field, they could cut off a pretty biggish corner, and make it nigh upon two mile. Thank you, Mr. Station-master.

The evening was balmy, the white road lay neatly and temptingly between the green hedges, and the journey by train had been rather hot and wearisome; so the young men girded their loins and strode forth.

"I don't suppose we shall be able to do anything to-night," said Harrick, looking at the sun, which was nearly setting. "It will be quite dusk when we get to the Parsonage."

"I hate coming into a man's house hungry," said Barringer, "and especially as I am not invited. I propose a slight supper at the first pub'."

"I hate the thought of a public-house much more," said Harrick; "and on this glorious evening I specially dislike spending any time in it. But I am getting hungry myself; and I propose going in a primitive fashion into the first house we come to, and ask whether they can give us something to eat."

"Very well," said Barringer, laughing, and pointing to the lodge that belonged to the park they were passing; "here is the first house, and you must try your experiment."

"And so I will," said Harrick, opening the gate. The door of the pretty lodge was open, and a girl of twelve was leaning against the dense honeysuckle. She looked at the two strangers with wondering eyes, and, in some confusion, turned them down.

"Is your father in, my little one?" said Harrick, putting his strong hand on the locks of the child.

"No, sir," said the child. "I have been waiting with tea for him ever so long; but he's gone after Charley."

"Come, Barry," said Warren triumphantly, "what did I say? Here is tea actually waiting for us."

"Would you mind making some more for us?" said Barringer, kneeling down by the child and stroking her hair tenderly. "We don't want to go into the public-house, and are very hungry."

"Oh yes, sir," said the child, with a shy laugh. "Our lady always says to father he is to give everybody that wants it water, or milk, or tea, or anything they like."

"Then your lady is a clever woman," said Barringer; "and so are you. What's your name?"

"Ada Porter. And our lady bought a very wicked public-house close by here; and she said anybody that wanted to drink should come here, and father and mother was to give 'em what they wants."

"And does mother give 'em that?" said Barringer, taking the child's hands in his. "Is she inside, or is she gone after Charley as well?"

"Mother is dead," said little Ada. "But she never didn't give nobody nothing, 'cause nobody never didn't come for nothing. You are the first as comes to ask for tea; and you are to come in and make yourselves as comfortable as you can."

"That we shall, Ada," said Barringer, taking the little girl by the hand and walking in with her. "I call this ever so much pleasanter than a public-house. What's your lady's name?"

"The Honourable Mrs. Fairfax. And she is so very beautiful and very kind; but she never don't allow nobody to see nothing of the park, 'cause it's private." Ada had by this time become quite confidential with the young painter, and led

him into the sitting-room, where forsooth a goodly tea stood ready for him that hunted Charley.

"It's no use your flirting with Miss Ada," said Harrick, who had quietly admired the little thing. "We have got to take our tea and be off, unless we want to come to Dr. Plumper's like thieves in the night."

"Come and pour out the tea for us, little Ada," said Barringer. "It will taste so nice if you give it us; it will be quite as nice as if the Honourable Mrs. Fairfax did it."

Little Ada blushed with pleasure, and when she had been helped into the chair, like a little woman, took her head at the table with perfect composure. It was evident that the lodge had been fitted up to give partial refreshment, for the room was large, and there was an unusual stock of crockery. The young men made a hearty meal of the pure bread and delicious butter, and amazed Ada with an entire shilling each. She seemed rather afraid of Harrick, whose deep grey eyes were fixed upon her with more earnestness than she had hitherto been accustomed to. But with Barringer the young lady had well-nigh fallen in love. She gave him a kiss with the greatest freedom, and when he promised to bring her a doll her little eyes glistened like dewdrops in a flower.

"We had better take the road through the

fields," said Harrick, looking at the sky, "else we shall be late. Now, you nimblest of men, I'll race you down the next field."

"Done!" cried Barringer; "and I'll give you three yards' start. I can beat you at that."

The evening air and their perfect freedom had already raised their spirits. Harrick had forgotten his defeat and the Masonic threats, and he felt as boisterous as a boy in full health. The race was a close one. Both men were clean built, and both were nimble. Barringer had boasted that he could give Harrick three yards; but when they got to the next stile he had not gained a foot. In the next field Harrick's superior weight began to tell on him. He gave a quick glance behind, and seeing his companion close to him, while he felt that he could not keep up, he dexterously dropped his bag for Barringer to stumble over. But the other, seeing the dodge, jumped out of the way, snatched up the bag, and, with a laugh, made for a small pond half-way down the meadow. Harrick divined his intention, and straining every nerve, placed himself between the pond and the bags, and grappled his opponent. A struggle ensued, in which the strength of the one was almost counter-balanced by the suppleness and agility of the other.

Both, laughing and exhausted with exertion, paused under a small and solitary tree, when a

voice above them said, in somewhat indistinct accents,

“Oh, you rascal!”

They looked up, and in the slender branches there sat, looking down upon them, a gorgeous parrot.

“He must have escaped from somewhere,” said Harrick. “Let us catch him, and find the owner.”

Barringer was already up the tree, but the liberated prisoner was already out of it. He could just flutter sufficiently to outrun his pursuers; and as he fled before them, and dodged them with surprising agility, the recollection of former wickedness returned, and he began to heap upon the twain most fearful ornithological denunciations. Harrick had taken up the bags, and he entered with energy into the pursuit. It was not easy to catch the bird. Field after field they followed him, and hedge after hedge he fluttered over, and denounced them from the other side. At last, just as they made sure they had him, he disappeared through a small hole in a hedge denser than the others.

“We’ll lose him if we don’t follow,” said Barringer, and at the same moment leaped across. Harrick threw the bags over, and followed. The chase continued, but became more difficult. There was much underwood, and there were big trees and winding paths, and the dusk was deepening.

At length, after an exciting quarter of an hour, Barringer put his hand on the trembling and fairly-beaten prisoner, and stood with his prey.

"We have got into somebody's grounds," said Harrick, "and how are we to get out again?"

"Go on till we find somebody," said Barringer; "he can't grumble. We have done a labour of love."

"Hush," said Harrick, "what is that?"

They both paused and listened.

"What exquisite music," whispered Barringer; "let us go and listen. It is glorious—it is divine."

Instinctively he turned into the path that led to the church. The rosy clouds gave it a golden and attractive hue, and it looked so picturesque outside, that neither of them imagined this to be the object of their journey. They approached from the vestry, and Barringer, who had cautiously lifted the latch, stole in and sat down noiselessly. Harrick followed him. It was perfectly dark where they sat, and the magnificent tones swelled and made the very walls vibrate with melody. Both men were powerfully moved—Barringer, who had a great knowledge and a great passion for music, was wondering who could so fill this house of God with song, and marvelled at the dexterity of the player. Harrick, who loved but did not know the melodious science, was almost moved

to tears by the sublime, melancholy, and sympathetic sorrow. He heaved a sigh, and dropped his bag. Instantly the music was interrupted by the deep bark of a dog. It ceased suddenly—the church was hushed in silence.

“Who’s there, Andrew?” said a female voice from above.

“There’s somebody strange,” said Andrew, getting up and peering into the dark, “but I canna see.”

The dog barked again, and there was a movement above. Harrick stepped forward promptly.

“I am afraid I have been intruding.”

“In a manner of speaking ye have, sir,” said Andrew.

“We lost our way in the grounds,” said Warren, “and were attracted by this sweet music. Is it over?”

At this moment there was a sound as of some one coming down-stairs. The door opened sneakingly, and there appeared the lion-like mane of Brutus. That classic dog slowly approached the stranger, satisfied himself about his personal respectability, wagged his huge tail, licked his hand, and returned to the organ.

“The dog kens ye,” said Andrew with a smile, “and they ken ye too. They’re mighty troubled about ye.”

"I hope not," said Harrick, wondering who the man was. "I should be sorry to trouble any one."

"Ay, that ye are," said Andrew, shaking his white locks; "but it is only the bad uns, and the young uns, that have been lazy and gotten drunk, that's afeard on ye."

Before Harrick could ask for an explanation, the door of the organ-loft opened again, gently yet boldly, and a lady advanced dimly through the twilight. She had her veil drawn over her face, and a light shawl enveloped her form; but Harrick, with an artist's eye, had comprehended the beauty of a figure that was hidden in such graceful folds. He made a profound bow as the lady passed. She glanced at him, returned the salute slightly, and passed by. Harrick felt his arm grasped with spasmodic force. It was Barringer, in the dark behind him; he uttered a sigh. The grasp tightened as the lady turned round suddenly and said:—

"How did you come here, sir?"

The tone was abrupt; it might almost be called commanding.

"I am sorry to say we are trespassers," said Harrick, rather taken aback.

"Then you did *not* come by one of the gates?"

"We did not. We came through one of the hedges."

"One of the hedges? I do not understand you, sir."

At this moment the little prisoner, having sufficiently recovered from his exhaustion and his fright, popped his head out of the handkerchief in which Barringer held him imprisoned, and gave a tremendous screech.

"That is the gentleman who led us on," said Harrick, laughing. "He led us through the hedge."


The bird at this moment uttered a slight sound.

"Why, that's Charley!" cried the lady with girlish glee. "He is as spiteful as ever. Where did you find him?"

"About a mile from here, in a field—hopping about, quite forlorn. He belongs to you, I suppose?"

"Yes. We lost him this afternoon, when he got loose. He often gets loose from his chain, and takes a holiday; don't you, Charley? you naughty, naughty boy."

Barringer, who had been silently gazing on the fair speaker from his somewhat obscure place, approached with the bird, which having regained composure, had perched on his hand. The lady threw back her veil and laughingly held out her lips to the bird—a motion which Charley evidently understood, for, with a chuckle, he passed over to her arm, and kissed her prettily. She laughed again, and with her little hand stroked his silken



crest. In so doing she touched Barringer with her hand. The contact seemed to thrill both. She drew back her hand, gave an involuntary glance upwards, and blushed deeply to find the young stranger's dark eyes fixed upon her with evident admiration. And, indeed, never was admiration bestowed upon anything more sweet. As she was standing in the porch the last rays of rosy light gave a slight additional flush to the fair, smooth cheeks. The large, fawn-like eyes, the pencilled eyebrows, somewhat raised, that lent to the face a peculiar and charming expression of wonderment, the delicate chin, the lips on which a childlike smile and an expression of sadness struggled for mastery—that was what Barringer beheld, and what his artistic eye comprehended and drank in with strange delight.

"I hope we have not disturbed you at your practice," said he in a low voice; "I should be so sorry."

"Oh, no!" said she, stroking Charley again, "it is getting too dark. I must go home."

"I am so fond of the 'Daughters of Zion!'" said he, "I could have listened to it all night long."

"Do you know it?" said the lady, with another quick glance at him. "Do you like it?"

"I like it when it is played with such exquisite expression," said Barringer. "You understand Mendelssohn."

"I think he must have understood me," answered she, with a slight laugh, "I never get tired of him. But I am afraid I must go, now. Thank you very much for Charley. Come along Brutus."

She took the bird in her hand, and with a slight bow, walked off with her companion. Andrew was preparing to lock the church and follow, when Harrick stopped him.

"My good friend—we want to be directed to the village of Beecham, where we must stop to-night."

"You'll barely do that, maister!" said Andrew, "it's a small place, and there is no hotels in it."

"But we are directed to the house of Dr. Plumper, the parson."

"Then you be the gentleman that come to restore this church?"

"I have come to inspect one—is this it? Then this must be Beecham Abbey."

"Ay—this must ha' been the Abbey, in days gone by," said Andrew; "but now they call the house the Abbey."

"I am glad this is the church, Barry. I was afraid I should have had to spend my time in some old musty little village church that was not worth patching up, and scarcely worth pulling down. But, as far as I can see, this looks genuine."

"Aye, ye can see that by the key—that it's

genuine," said Andrew, holding up a huge instrument.

"Are you going to lock the doors and take this key with you? Because I am an early bird, and begin work in the morning before most people are up. Where do you keep this key, so that I may call for it?"

"We won't be in bed when you call for it!" said Andrew. "Our young lady is very early herself, and maybe you'll see her when you come to-morrow. She will be pleased to hear that you have come. Yonder is the way to Beecham village—straight on, and the last house in the village is the Doctor's."

So saying, Andrew locked the ancient door and shuffled after his "young lady," who had disappeared between the trees.

CHAPTER XV.

AT BEECHAM.

ALTHOUGH the parish of Beecham was of considerable extent, the duty of the vicar was happily confined to a very small area. The greater part of it was occupied by the large estates that surrounded it; the village itself was entirely built on property belonging to the Beecham estate, and as its lords were always most land-loving and conservative, and considered that building upon land destroyed its value for ever, the villagers, who made up a population of five hundred souls, found themselves compelled to live on an area that could only have housed half their number with comfort. The Vicar, who despised such considerations, would gladly have assisted them, but his Vicarage was barely enough for himself and his experiments. His name was great in science. His researches in mythology and botany had alike rendered him famous; and not unfrequently some Oriental scholar, who had been familiar with his

name for a generation, came down to Beecham to visit the learned man in his seclusion. If it had been explained to him that the Vicar left his vicarious duties pretty much to a curate, and spent the ample income of his benefice in prosecuting scientific experiments, he might have been led to ponder, and perhaps to compare the Anglican priesthood with the Egyptian.

However, the Vicar could do nothing, and Mrs. Fairfax having only an interest for life, could do little more, and the village had increased until it reached the verge of discomfort; the surplus population had naturally migrated to Bircham, which was the property of a worldly-minded man; and in a few years Bircham had grown into a prosperous little town. The small river Thone was found excellent for the purpose of paper manufacture, and to the disgust of the noble neighbours, that portion of the lovely valley of the Thone which was beyond their control soon bristled with chimneys, and Bircham now teemed with a prosperous and not very conservative population.

But Mrs. Fairfax, although she could not build, could improve, and to improvement she had given all her attention. As Harrick leaned out of his window next morning, and saw the neat houses, their solidity of construction, their excellent arrangement for storing water, the well-kept road, and remembered that he had been struck the

previous night by the manner in which the streets were lighted, he felt that some good hand had been at work here. The cool morning air swept by him with fresh and dewy scent. He felt light-hearted. His restlessness had gone; he had slept again with the calmness of youth. He looked round his room, and found it, like the house, old-fashioned, but still bright and well-preserved. The furniture dated from a former period, but the bed was modern, and among the few books on a side-table he discovered some whose authors he knew as the leaders of modern thought.

As he looked out, he was attracted by the figure of a man advancing from the woods. Could it be Barringer? He lifted his head a moment from his breast and glanced upwards. It was indeed the young painter, who seemed gloomy and absorbed in sullen thoughts. He entered silently; and Harrick now remembered that he had parted from him on the previous night in a somewhat similar mood. He opened the door that communicated between the two bed-rooms just as Barringer came in. It was easy to see from his looks that he had enjoyed but little repose during the night. His hair was dishevelled, his face begrimed with heat and dust, and he presented altogether so melancholy a picture, that Harrick sat down on the window-sill and burst into a hearty laugh. Barringer smiled.

"Why, man alive!" said Harrick, "I thought you had given that kind of thing up for good?"

"I have given everything up," said Barringer, throwing himself on the bed.

"You look so pitiful and guilty, I am afraid to hear that some murder has been committed during the night."

"I was afraid you might have heard of a suicide," muttered Barringer.

Harrick started and frowned. "What words are these, Barringer?" said he, sternly.

"Never mind, Warren. Leave me—I want to be alone," said the unhappy youth.

"You shall not be alone until you confess that you are ashamed of such words."

"Ashamed!" cried Barringer, with a fierce look. "Yes, ashamed that I was too great a coward. That's all."

"Coward!" repeated Harrick. "Too great a coward were you? We'll soon see that." His eyes rested upon a set of boxing-gloves on the wall, a relic of the Vicar's younger days. He took one pair and threw the other on the bed. "If you are so great a coward," said he, determinedly, "you shall eat those words."

"Eat my words?" said Barringer, starting up, white as the linen on his couch. "Are you mad?"

"No, perfectly sane," answered Harrick, quietly; "but I feel insulted, and you must give an apology or take a beating."

"By heaven!" said the misanthrope, biting his lip, "this is a queer jest."

"It's not a jest," said Harrick; "unless you are too much of a coward even for that."

Barringer flushed to the roots of his hair, and silently bared his arm.

"I shall like this," he said, looking at Harrick's magnificent chest and arms, well shaped, muscular, and as hard as marble; "this will be a diversion. You can stand some punishment."

Barringer was by much the slighter man, but as he advanced Harrick looked into a pair of eyes that might know gloom but that knew no fear. They were pretty evenly balanced, though the weight of skill inclined to the younger man's side. He waited for no preliminaries, but attacked with impetuosity and vigour. Harrick began by keeping on the defensive, but after a few rounds his blood got up, and some of his blows began to fall heavily on his antagonist's chest, when they were interrupted. The ancient dame who looked to the Vicar's worldly matters indoors, became immoderately frightened at the scuffling up-stairs, and ran to the door, which she opened without compunction.

"Lord love you, gentlemen—though I shouldn't

say it—I hope there's no quarrelling between you," cried she.

"No, Mrs. Prim," said Harrick, laughing heartily at the frightened face; "we were only playing. We will be down to breakfast in a few minutes." Barringer also laughed; but as Mrs. Prim withdrew, not much re-assured, the look of fighting returned to his face. Harrick regarded him with his winning smile.

"I beg your pardon, Barringer. I only wanted to knock that mood out of you. Is it gone?"

"No, Harrick," said he, shaking his head; "it will never go again. I am utterly miserable."

"I could see that," said Harrick; "but no amount of misery excuses what you said."

"I don't see my way out," murmured the young painter.

"Have a good bath and a good breakfast, and come to the church," said Harrick, "and you'll see it soon enough."

Barringer shook his head. "I shall go and sketch a mill on Bircham Common."

"It's my opinion you saw a ghost last night, and you're afraid you'll see another," laughed Harrick.

"For God's sake, Harrick, don't jest with me. There are feelings that you know nothing of."

"There are," answered Harrick, with a curling lip. "This is something quite new to me. A

gentleman's house, and a nice bed-room, and an ancient lady for servant. I'll turn gloomy presently. It will suit the furniture."

He went to his own room to finish his toilet, and re-entered presently, perfectly equipped.

"Some men are never fools except when they should be wise," said he sagely. "A time comes when a man should look his very best: he goes out all night, don't sleep, and appears in the morning like a whipped dog. Had you done like I, you would have looked as fresh and pleasant as Nature could make you."

He did certainly look as fresh and handsome as Nature had intended he should. He wore a loose jacket of black velveteen, with wide sleeves, and fastened round the waist by a band. It was a costume to which he was very partial, as he could wear it with a clean collar only, and looked in it not unlike the portraits of the great Sir Anthony Vandyke, that most elegant of Dutchmen. His chestnut locks fell around his head, and they would have looked all the better if they had fallen on his shoulders. Barringer glanced at him and then at himself in the glass, and saw a sallow complexion and troubled eye; and he envied the strong man who could bear the weight of troubles and of work and of disappointment, and look, as he looked that moment, like one who had triumphed in everything.

Mrs. Prim had no reason to complain of her guests in the way of eating. They did ample justice to her fare, and started for the little church when the lark had not yet exhausted his carol. The lodge-keeper, who had received instructions to let them pass, was already on the look-out, and touched his hat respectfully as they passed through the gates. After they had walked for some moments in silence, they arrived at a point where the path divided. The left led straight to the church, the right to the house, which could be faintly seen through the trees.

"I propose to go to the house first," said Harrick, "and ask Mrs. Fairfax whether she has any drawings."

"But she may not want to be disturbed," said Barringer, reluctantly following.

"We can see that in five seconds," answered Harrick, smiling. "I almost fancy I see her through the trees."

There was indeed the figure of a lady, clad in white summer costume, tending her flowers. She saw them and advanced with a smile. It was Katherine, who courteously acknowledged their bows.

"I am glad you came, Mr. Harrick," said she; "I wanted to see you before you went to the church."

"I came to know whether, perhaps, you have

some drawings at the house that could help us."

"Precisely," said Katherine. "There are some in the library—a whole portfolio full. Will you come and see?"

They followed her to the house. Harrick passed through the hall, and up the broad steps, and through the tapestried gallery, with strangely mixed feelings. He entered the library last, and his footsteps were lost on the soft Oriental texture; but he moved uneasily. It was not often he had been in such rooms; he had never been in one as an equal or a guest, and this lady spoke to him as if he were. He was a trifle awkward; he knew not what to do with his hat; and his embarrassment was heightened by finding that Barringer moved about with an ease and facility that showed he was accustomed to such scenes. Katherine guessed by instinct what was his condition, and with admirable tact requested him to help her in carrying the portfolio. He obeyed willingly, and, once in front of the drawings and sketches, he was himself again.

It had been a hobby of one of the ancestors to collect drawings and details—studies of the most celebrated Gothic churches in the world; and in this portfolio was a rare collection. Harrick looked through them with delight, and met with many an old acquaintance. He explained some, and

in explaining became interesting, and even enthusiastic. Katherine listened with pleasure; she had been so long alone, and she was so fond of listening to a clever man's explanation of things, that she could have listened all the morning. She looked at him with her great fawn-like eyes, and laughed with childish innocence at his humorous descriptions. There was another portfolio, containing some very old drawings, supposed to belong to the church, and Harrick proposed that the lot should be taken thither.

"I should very much like to go with you," said Katherine, innocently. "I hope I shan't disturb you. I shall be very quiet."

"We shall be only too glad to have your company," said Harrick.

Barringer eagerly offered to carry the drawings, and wanted to know what other service he could do; but Katherine had already rung the bell, and Andrew entered to take the burden. But neither Harrick nor Barringer would hear of this; so they set out, leading the way, with Andrew and Brutus in the rear. There was no lack of conversation. It was a peculiarity of Katherine's temperament that confidence and reserve never went together. Where she trusted, she was open; where she was open, she was charming. She spoke about the surrounding beauties, and in her turn interested her hearers. Barringer paused before a glade, and remained struck with its simple beauty.

"Is it not lovely?" exclaimed she.

"It is majestic!" said Barringer slowly. "I must sketch this."

"I have tried it so often, and always failed, that I am getting tired of it," said Mrs. Bell.

"If you do not object to show me your sketches," said Barringer, with low and earnest voice, "I shall be happy to give you my assistance."

Katherine blushed, and gave him a shy glance as she walked on somewhat hastily. They arrived at the church soon after, and were not sorry to enter its cool precincts, for the morning was already hot. The exterior of the ancient building had been kept in excellent preservation. The successive occupiers of Beecham had allowed the local mason to do nothing but gently resist the hand of Time, and the hand of Time had left but little mark on the exterior walls. But many years of churchwardenism and patronage had played sad havoc with the interior long before that period; and it was evident that the Roundheads, or some other force, on mutilation bent, had finished what had been so well begun. Delicate tracery in windows, flowing lines, and graceful curves, had been fearfully knocked about and destroyed.

"Why, this is a clustered column!" said Harrick, after some time. "I wonder whether I can get a ladder?"

"Oh, yes; Mrs. Fairfax ordered one to be here at ten o'clock," said Katherine.

"Mrs. Fairfax!" exclaimed both men, looking at each other and at her.

"Yes," said Katherine, smiling at their astonishment. "Mrs. Fairfax is the mistress of Beecham."

"I thought—at least I imagined—that you were Mrs. Fairfax," said Harrick, with some confusion.

"Oh, dear, no!" laughed she. "Mrs. Fairfax is in town. My name is Mrs. Bell—and I am only her friend. She is in London—Mrs. Fairfax is in London, with her father, Lord—— Oh, here are the men with the ladders."

The two workmen from the local builder at that moment appearing in the doorway, the name of the peer did not escape Katherine's lips, nor fell upon Harrick's unsuspecting ear. His attention was now entirely occupied with his work, and as he recognised in one of the men a former employé of Mason's, there was some slight exchange of reminiscences between them. It was in the meantime determined to carefully examine the column that supported the organ, for it was here that the first discovery of the real nature of the original structure was made. Barringer had taken the drawings to the vestry, and had already found a portion of them that corresponded with the building as it stood. The exterior seemed to have

remained pretty much as it was intended by the founders, but there was a mass of old and nearly effaced drawings for the interior which showed that among the monks of the old abbey there must have been some at least who were masters in the art, and who had had the courage and patience to work out on paper what they intended in stone.

"I wonder whether any remnants of the old abbey still remain?" said Barringer, pensively.

"In a manner of speaking, sir," said Andrew, "there's all them that used to live about here still coming to say their prayers at matins and vespers."

"I should say it was much more likely they come to listen to the music," said Barringer, with a smile.

"Ay, they are mighty fond of that too, and so is the old general. Ain't he, miss?" said the perverse old retainer.

"I don't understand your ghosts and ghost stories," answered Katherine, with an angry frown, for she saw that Barringer's ear had caught the appellation, and for an instant his eyes looked into hers. She felt annoyed, and walked into the church, where Harrick was conversing with Baldwin, the workman. He was leaning, with his back towards her, against a pillar, in a somewhat negligent attitude; but as she looked at him she felt a singular, instinctive respect for this strange man. She had noticed his momentary awkward-

ness in the library, and by the manner in which he addressed her the previous night and that morning she had perceived at once that he was no carpet-knight. His manner was gentle enough, but there was an absence of that bland turtle-doveness that made the well-bred young men of the day so exquisite and so uninteresting. She wondered who he was, and listened to catch his conversation with the builder.

"You have a lean and hungry look, Baldwin. I am afraid you don't sleep at night. Is business bad?"

"No, it ain't particular bad," said Baldwin. "We are pretty fairish as regards that."

"I should have thought there was not much to do in such a small place as Beecham," said Harrick.

"No more there ain't," said the builder; "but I am at Bircham, and that is a largish place."

"But not quite large enough for you, I suppose?" suggested Harrick.

"Oh, yes. It ain't that," answered the other, tightening a knot; "but we get so worried; and a fellow can't forget his principles, can he?"

"I am sorry to say a great many fellows do, Baldwin. They may be an exception in Bircham, however."

"Oh, no, they ain't," said Mr. Baldwin. "They are a queerish lot; but there is two or three things they sticks to uncommon strong. We have half-

a-dozen paper-mills down there, you know, and there's a lot of hands employed on them. Now, most of them, like myself, are Liberals, and a good many out-and-out Radicals; but there's a knot that has formed themselves into what they call a Conservative Working-men's Association; and they have actually taken it into their heads to have a demonstration to thank the House of Lords for rejecting this here Bill."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harrick, "they are beginning early. When is it to be?"

"To-morrow evening. And here comes the stiffish part of the affair. There is a Radical Club in the town that won't hear of it, and they have defied the Conservative fellows to hold their meeting."

"The good Radicals recalling the old days of riot and political hatred!" said Harrick. "That sounds queer."

"It does. It sounds very queerish," said Baldwin. "And there's a good many Irish among them, and there will be a jolly row if nothing is done to stop it. Our parson, who is a Liberal, has tried to stop them; and Dr. Plumper, who is a sort of Liberal, he has written to them, and he is coming down from London to try and stop it; and the county constabulary is being called out, and all the rest of it."

"And where is this to be?"

"In the market-place at Bircham. It's the new one, and big enough to hold two or three thousand."

"Are they going to have any good speakers or anybody of influence?"

"Not they. Everybody knows there's going to be roughish play, and every man-jack that could speak has declined. Now, between you and me, if some of them only had the pluck to face it, the whole thing might get right. But they are fools."

"Yes," said Harrick; "fools on both sides. We must stop these Radicals. The association has a perfect right to demonstrate."

"But they ought to listen to reason," said Baldwin, "for we are out-and-out the stronger."

"Then they would be listening to force. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. I am not afraid of Conservative working-men, and I think they ought to hold their demonstration. I'll go down with you to-night, and talk it over with the fellows of your club, and if they'll promise to keep quiet I'll speak at that meeting, row or not; and if I don't make them laugh, I shall be disappointed. Is that a bargain? Good. Now let us look at this carving."

CHAPTER XVI.

BIRCHAM.

THE market-place of Bircham next evening was a sight for the gods. The Conservative working-men were triumphant. They had resisted all opposition, they had been deaf to every appeal, and they were going to hold their demonstration. Warren Harrick had thrown himself into this business with his accustomed energy, and when he had made known his plan of campaign, the Liberal and most of the Radical working-men had rallied round him. He had called upon the leaders of the party, and shown them that it was in their own interest to allow this demonstration to come off; that violence would be the beginning of endless strife; but that if they could vanquish the foe by peaceable means, and meet his arguments by stronger reason, he would feel defeat very much more severely. He also called on the chief constable, and induced him to keep his men in the background.

Every window that looked out upon the tolerably spacious market-square was densely crowded, for the expectation of a row was great. A slight disappointment began to be felt when, some half hour before the time stipulated, the square began to fill with men who evidently belonged to the opposite party, and who behaved with remarkable decorum. The evening was magnificent. The day had been warm, bright, and genial; and the temper of the Liberals had evidently become very good-humoured. There was no such thing as a policeman to be seen. The spectators wondered, and felt disgusted. The market-place filled more and more. The hour struck; the sounds of an approaching band were heard; and the C. W. M. A. marched in, headed by two immense blue banners, and a true-blue waggon which was to serve as platform. The crowds parted in silence, and allowed them to take up their position in front of the public pump. The band played "God Save the Queen"; Mr. Smith was voted to the chair; and the ponderous butcher, who had prepared himself for a good half-hour's shouting, mounted the waggon. He was listened to with deep silence, faltered, and broke down in the middle.

A short ironical cheer informed him that he did not die unobserved, although inglorious, and the next speaker, Mr. Jones—a mild man with a high

voice—poured forth his platitudes with extra-nervous rapidity, and was listened to with the same grave silence. He was loud in praise of the great House, which he called the bulwark of the constitution; and, without much accuracy, prayed down Heaven's blessing on the keystone of that bulwark, the chief obstructor of the nation, the pride of the House, Lord Burgos. There stood round the waggon a compact nucleus of C. W. M. associates, who cheered tremendously at this name; but in the counter cheer that answered them, there was less of irony than before, for Burgos was admired by many a Liberal for his sagacity. This was the only incident of any note. The speakers that followed were hopelessly dull and inaudible. The nucleus had scarcely the heart to cheer; the band was called upon to lend its assistance, and lent it discordantly; a formal vote of thanks was about to be proposed, and the waggon was preparing to start on its journey back, when there was a slight commotion in front. Everybody turned—the windows filled again—the silence became breathless. It was somebody who requested to speak on the motion. He was a stranger—a Radical probably. Smith objected.

"What, Mr. Chairman!" said a clear voice, "do *you* refuse a Briton the right of free speech?"

"You are not down on our programme, sir," answered the chairman, somewhat confused.

"So much the better," cried another voice; "he will be a pleasant surprise to us all."

The stranger had already mounted the waggon, and as he rose to full length and bared his head, all the women admired that strong and manly figure. He had not said more than a few words, and they were words of compliment to the able chair, when every ear in the market-place was strained to catch the sounds that followed. He began in a somewhat low tone, but even then every accent travelled to the farthest corner; and presently, as he raised his voice, and his utterance became slightly more rapid, and the motion of his right hand at once free and appropriate, the crowd began to press more closely together, and the silence waxed intense. The nucleus, pleased with his appearance and his opening words, had settled to listen with delight; and when he began to praise the C. W. M. A. for their public spirit and their determination to exercise the glorious right of public meeting, they gave him such a cheer as not even their own champions had received.

But lo! gradually there crept into his tone a slight strain of sarcasm. In a few more sentences the audience was in a roar of laughter at a droll imitation of Mr. Jones and a vigorous onslaught upon the arguments of the ponderous chairman. There was a slight interruption on the part of the nucleus when they began to discover which way

the wind really blew ; but Harrick turned upon them suddenly, and, with that sternness which sat upon him like a sable cloud, dared them to interrupt him, when he had listened to their speeches with such good-temper. "What!" said he. "You have had your say ; you have told us all ; and we have received your words with respect. You cannot be so ungenerous, so unmanly, as to refuse us that same courtesy. You have expressed your admiration of Lord Burgos ; and when you cheered the mention of his name I joined heartily, for although I do not hold with his opinions I admire the man. Gentlemen, that nobleman would blush with indignation if he beheld you endeavouring to stifle free discussion and to play dog-in-the-manger. I have had something to do with this Bill ; and if you permit me I will give you a short history of it, and an explanation that may possibly amuse and astonish you."

And then with capital humour, and that assurance and striking use of contrast, begotten by a perfect knowledge of the subject, he gave them the history of the Bill, in outlines, that left no doubt of his accuracy, however careful he might be to conceal names. When he had fairly got his audience under control, he turned upon the Conservative nucleus, the working-men, the hope, the strength, the mainstay of England, as he called them, and with accents of bitter scorn, upbraided

them for betraying their own interests, for being blind to the faults of their masters, and willing to suffer an indignity which they would have been too generous to have laid upon the shoulders of their enemies. He paused for a moment—with a rapid peroration, in which he seemed to have concentrated all the irony, sarcasm, and fire of his nature; he ended abruptly, and disappeared from his tribune before anyone had made up his mind to stop him.

At such moments, Harrick felt a strong desire to fly from mankind and bury himself in solitude. The paltry language of small men grated upon his ears. He chose the silent and unfrequented back streets, trusting that chance would bring him into the road that led to Beecham at some future point. His organ for locality, however, had never been much developed; he took the wrong road, walked at a brisk pace, and never noticed his mistake until he was confronted by a finger-post that stood at right angles, and proclaimed the road to Beecham to be four miles in an opposite direction. The air was delicious, the country almost deserted, and Harrick, not sorry for his mistake, altered his course accordingly. At the end of a mile he struck into a main road, but failing to recognize it as the one which he wanted, he looked round for an informant. A stately old gentleman was walking in front of him, to whom, with a polite remark, he turned

for advice. The gentleman regarded him with a kindly blue eye and a smile.

"My dear sir," said he, "you are the very man I most desire to see."

"I am glad of that, sir," said Harrick, simply, noticing that the stranger wore the habit of the Church.

"So am I, sir, I assure you," said he. "Your speech was admirable. All moderation is wisdom. You were eloquently moderate, therefore you were eloquently wise."

"I have a notion that you are Dr. Plumper," said Harrick.

"I have long had that same notion," replied the Vicar, with a bright laugh; "and you are my guest, Mr. Harrick. I hope Mrs. Prim has made you pretty comfortable."

"I have to thank you for your attention," said Harrick, simply. "You have treated me like a gentleman."

The Vicar looked at him somewhat puzzled, but a glance at the guileless grey eyes showed him what manner of man he had before him, and that what was said in simplicity should be received with respect.

"I feel rather awkward," continued Harrick, "because we came down here expecting to put up at the inn, when we found your kindness had pre-

pared for us in the Vicarage. I had a friend who was so bold as to come with me."

"So much the better," said the Vicar, heartily. "I am a lonely man, and I like young fellows. I have been a bit of an artist myself—amateur, of course—and I shall have to ask your advice on many things."

"You have just come from Bircham, I presume?" asked Harrick, after a moment's silence.

"I have. I heard you from the hotel window, and I must say, young man, that you have a most remarkable gift of eloquence. Where did you get it?"

"I was born with it, I suppose," said Harrick; "and my father was an intimate friend of William Cobbett, and so often told me that eloquence was the noblest of man's gifts that I determined to practise it."

"I have no great fondness for that name," said Dr. Plumper, with a frown.

"It is a great name," replied Harrick, respectfully. "It is a beacon of hope for a poor man. It is a glorious example of one who rose literally from the ranks, and coped with the highest intellect in the country."

"He was an example of turbulence, fickleness, and caprice," said the Vicar.

"He wanted moderation, perhaps," said Harrick, "but he struggled alone, against immense oppo-

sition. He was for a long time the solitary man of the people, and he roused the popular spirit to a splendid pitch, and to no evil."

"It belongs to the Eternal Why," muttered the Vicar, "that so much talent should be so wasted and so admired."

"I was told that you are half a Conservative," said the artisan.

"Yes, I am perhaps more of a Conservative than a Radical. But we shall not quarrel, I assure you."

"Oh no, sir—not that; but I am surprised that you were pleased with my speech."

"Well, Mr. Mason gave you somewhat the character of an agitator; and when I was told that you were about to speak, I was very much afraid there would be a row. But I was delighted. Mr. Mason was mistaken."

"And do you know," said Harrick, laughing, "that he sent me down here to keep quiet? Why, who is this?—it is surely my young friend Barringer? He is given to fits of melancholy."

Barringer had thrown himself under a tree, and was staring moodily before him, while an unfinished sketch lay by his side. He looked up as Harrick advanced, and rose to be introduced to the Vicar. He bowed in silence to the Doctor's hearty welcome, and answered in polite monosyllables; but not even the cheery conversation of his host

at the supper-table, nor his excellent claret, nor his more excellent cigar at the open window, could dispel the youth's gloom. Harrick looked at him with concern. He had a deep affection for the companion whom he had once saved from a fearful crime, and who had followed him ever since like a slave. The Vicar had tact enough to take no notice of this, and endeavoured to entertain his guest by describing, in a very lively manner, the relations between the different parties in Hopshire—a matter on which he could speak with authority, as he had been intimately acquainted with it for a quarter of a century. From the history of parties, the venerable host came gradually to the history of the county; and, being by inclination of antiquarian habits, his mind was a perfect storehouse of curious anecdotes and matters of interest connected with the land. He spoke like a scholar, and his descriptions were so graphic that even Barringer was interested.

“You know Hopshire is worthy of all respect,” said he. “I believe the names of half the places are of very ancient date; and though it is a popular belief that hops were first introduced into England in Henry VIII.'s reign, I have very good reason for thinking otherwise. The name, at any rate, dates at least as far back as Cæsar; and in the middle of a heath a couple of miles from here there is a ruin of a Druidical temple and a burying

ground, where I lately found some skulls, out of which, no doubt, the Britons drank their wort. On one of the stones I deciphered the word Hop; but whether it is the root of our word 'high'—the German 'hoch'—or whether at that time it already had the meaning it now has, I don't know. But it's a splendid ruin, and looks famous by moonlight. Would you like to go? It is a pleasant walk; and your friend might like to sketch it, perhaps."

Harrick, always eager to see and learn, accepted with pleasure; but Barringer begged that he might be excused, and pleaded fatigue. The Vicar, though looking somewhat disappointed, proposed to Harrick to walk over with him alone, when Mrs. Prim entered with many apologies. She had forgotten to tell him that Mrs. Fairfax had driven past in the carriage about half an hour before he came in, and finding that he was not at home, had left a message that she hoped to see him in the course of the evening.

"Why, there's no train from London which arrives at Beecham till ten minutes to nine," said he, "how could she have come?"

"She came from Bircham way, I think," said Mrs. Prim.

"Then it is very odd, that we did not see her drive past. However, I must obey commands. I am sorry to leave you, gentlemen; but if

ound, where I lately found some skulls, out of which, no doubt, the Britons drank their wine. One of the stones I deciphered the word *Hog*: whether it is the root of our word *high*—the German '*hoch*'—or whether at that time it already had the meaning it now has, I don't know. But it is a splendid ruin, and looks famous by monument. Would you like to go? It is a pleasant walk; and your friend might like to spend his chaps."

Harrick, always eager to see and learn, accepted with pleasure; but Barringer begged that he might be excused, and pleaded fatigue. The latter, though looking somewhat disappointed, proposed to Harrick to walk over with him alone, when Mrs. Prim entered with many apologies. She had forgotten to tell him that Mrs. Fairfax had driven past in the carriage about half an hour before he came in, and finding that he was not at home, had left a message that she hoped to see him in the course of the evening.

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"She came from Bircham way, I think," said Mrs. Prim.

"Then it is very odd, that we did not see her arrive past. However, I must obey command. I am sorry to leave you, gentlemen; but if

you like to visit this ruin by yourself, Mr. Harrick——”

“I was going to ask, sir,” said Harrick, “whether we are supposed not to visit the park after dark? for on the night of our arrival we heard such sweet music in the little church, that we would like to try and hear it again.”

“Oh, yes; that must have been Mrs. Bell—she plays very beautifully. But I doubt whether she’ll be there to-night.”

“Do you think the ladies would object to our taking a quiet walk in that part of the park?” asked Barringer eagerly. “I am sure we shall be discreet enough, and not approach the house.”

“Mrs. Fairfax, I am sure, won’t object,” said the Vicar; “in fact, as she has given me permission to introduce anyone I think fit, I may extend that privilege to you. You had better go to the further gate, as it is nearest the church.”

“Are you not too tired?” said Harrick, with a smile, when the Vicar had gone, and Barringer was preparing to leave also.

“This place is stifling,” said the young painter. “I must get out into the open air.”

“Poor boy,” said Harrick, laying a kindly hand on his shoulder, “hast thou been scorched by the great fire?”

“If you knew what tortures I suffer,” said the unhappy youth, “you would pity me. I envy

you, Warren. You don't know what a pleasure it is to be insusceptible."

"It can't be a pleasure," said Harrick, philosophically, "at the best it can only be an absence of pain."

"Let us get into the park quickly," said Barringer, hurrying forward, "they might shut us out. Have you ever been in love in your life?"

"Never," answered the other with a laugh; "but if I were I would not dangle about it as some people do."

"Pah! What would you do in case you found it impossible to marry the woman you loved?"

"I would take good care not to fall in love, to begin with," said the stoic drily.

"But if you were obliged to be in her company for some hours—if you made a sketch for her, and felt yourself indescribably happy in her presence, and knew that she was not for you—would you not feel that there could scarcely be any harder punishment in the world?"

"I cannot imagine the case," said Harrick, decisively. "A man can always quench a fire ere it be too late."

"You talk like a schoolboy," exclaimed Barringer, impatiently. "Have you ever even seen a woman you could love?"

"Never!" repeated Harrick, but no longer with a laugh.

"Aha!" said his friend, with a touch of malice, "never?—not a single face you could adore?"

"I have seen one," said Harrick, slowly, "and one only; but that is scarcely a fair case. I saw her amid strange surroundings, and she looked to me as high—as high as the princess in the fairy-tale did to the beggar boy."

"And did you think she was beautiful?"

"Yes; she was so beautiful that I am sure no master-hand could fashion clay into the likeness of her; and I never dreamt, till I saw her, that flesh and blood could be so fair."

"And have you been long in her company?"

"Not a minute longer than I could help."

"But a great deal longer than you ought?"

"Oh no, not at all," said Harrick, cuttingly. "What might have happened if I had been compelled to make sketches with her, I don't know; but I was not long enough with her to begin thinking of misery. Besides, it is preposterous. I am a working-man—she a great lady. She has a dozen footmen better dressed and more gentlemanly than I, and I don't suppose she ever looked at me. The daughter of a lord, too."

"That's nothing," said Barringer slowly; "at least, it could only make you more miserable."

"Nay, there we differ," said Harrick. "No man—no strong man, at least, gets miserable over impossibilities. But to grow miserable, without

having pluck enough to find out whether it is impossible—that is contemptible.”

He said these words with unwonted harshness, and they walked on in silence. The dusk had fallen, and as they approached the church from the woods they could hear the sound of the organ through the open door. The effect was marvellous. Barringer hurried on, afraid to lose a note; but Harrick seemed withheld by some invisible power. What was this strange feeling which the short conversation had brought upon him? The sultry day drawing to a close, threatened, like the reign of a capricious and foolish prince, to end in fierce and fiery contest. Dark violet clouds loomed in the horizon; the sinking light was harsh and discordant; the atmosphere was charged with electricity; the birds, hushed with the fear of a coming storm, had crept away under leaves that were still and motionless in the breathless air. Slow and majestic the tremulous tones of an anthem replaced the wild music that had hitherto poured forth. It seemed as if a soul, troubled with contending passions, had caught a higher and loftier spirit, and was breathing the calm atmosphere of peace.

Harrick sank on a tombstone. He was far away from the busy scenes of his labours, from the ambition, the strife and hatred of men; and while he sat there surrounded by the monuments of

death, overshadowed by that lofty pile, the work of his masters, nothing could remind him of that passion, that burning fever of his brain, that delirium which made the blood course through his veins, that folly which he dared not whisper into the ear of night; and yet, how was it that he saw her form, seemed to hear her voice, and felt that fever, with all its exultation and daring, its dreadful despondency and buoyant aspirations, steal upon him like a thief? The music ceased, but he heard it still, and he seemed to behold her figure.

“Great heaven!” The cry escaped his pale and trembling lips, and his hand clutched the stone, for she stood before him. He would have doubted his senses, but that Andrew followed close behind with wrapper and shawl. She saw his confusion, and—was it a dream?—was it the sunset that tinged her cheek?—could she for an instant have faltered? No—impossible. Her face was as cold and condescending as a high-bred lady’s face should be.

“I was very pleased to hear that you had been sent to do this, Mr. Harrick,” said she. “I hope you will like it.”

Harrick bowed in silence, and dared not look after her as she passed. He sat upon the stone, and the lightning played around him, and the thunder shook the ancient abbey; but he laughed, for he knew that there was within him a storm fiercer than any which the elements could wage.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ABBEY.

THE heavenward-pointing arch, that chaste-proportioned curving, which rekindled enthusiasm in a brutal age, which drew into earnest fellowship the genius of hostile nations, and rallied their waning piety—that arch rose, amidst clumsy and barbarous companions, as pure and slender as the goddess of the moon among fauns; and spread like a new creed from people to people, and from race to race.

Among its many masters the Gothic art had found none more imbued with its genius than the original designer of Beecham Abbey. It was evident that the church had been built with great care under the supervision of one mind, for it was resisting the hand of Time long after the very ruins of the monastery had disappeared; and therefore it was so much the more surprising that a structure upon which such labour had been spent, should present so clumsy, sombre, and ungraceful an interior.

It was this question which had puzzled Harrick. He had seen at a glance that the design of the building, though small, was a perfect specimen of the later French style. He had come upon details that escaped the casual observer, and had found in them an amount of thought which reminded him of the finest specimens on Seine and Rhine. And yet, why was the entire effect so unsatisfactory? He was at work on the investigation of a column soon after sunrise next day; and before the breakfast-hour had arrived, he had not only laid bare a piece of ornamentation of rare beauty and finish, but after having made a careful survey of the entire building, he had been confirmed in his original opinion that although much was due to the Puritans, neglect had begun long before them. Centuries of monkdom and churchwardenism had covered the clustered piers with thick alternate layers of dirt and whitewash. Delicate foliations had been filled in or even bricked up; and the Puritan warriors, although perhaps more malicious, had scarcely been more successful in hiding or distorting the flamboyant tracery.

Harrick had not spent his teens in wandering amongst the great masterpieces, from Bayonne to Königsberg, without having become deeply enamoured of and learned in the art. He had thoroughly penetrated into the spirit, like the great men of old, who were not more sculptors than

designers, not more designers than draughtsmen, and who, as they could not write books, wrote their poems in stone. He found among the plans and drawings much that had been added by later and evidently inferior hands, and much that had happily never been carried out; but there remained drawings of sterling value, which he had no doubt were the work of the original designer. He gave the entire morning of the following day to their study, while Barringer, who had become interested in the work, was busily engaged in making clearer copies of them.

It was a relief to be working in this cool and silent place; it was comparatively easy to be engrossed by his work; and although it advanced very slowly during the day, it advanced to his satisfaction. Baldwin and his mate had, under his directions, continued the unmasking of the column; he himself examined the clerestory; and Barringer had almost finished the drawing of a small trefoil arch, which was repeated in various ways with exquisite effect. But as the day wore on, the young artist, who had not yet recovered from his fit of melancholy, threw down his work, and took once more to solitary roaming.

The masons, who had been ordered to do some job in the house that wanted immediate attention, had also gone off, and Harrick found himself alone. Painful thoughts began to disturb him; the scene

of the previous night, short though it had been, seemed to pass before his eyes incessantly. He found himself sitting moodily on the seat, staring on the ground like Barringer. He rose and shook his head. He knew the remedy for that state of things well enough. He resumed the blouse, and, mounting the scaffold, took up the mason's tools and began working away with energy. By degrees, mechanical though the work was, his mind became fixed upon it, and he began to breathe more freely, when he heard the sound of horses outside, and a voice, which he knew but too well, calling upon Andrew to attend. Harrick felt his hands tremble, but he compressed his lips and worked on. It was his habit to wear a little skull-cap, and Lizzie had made him one of blue velvet with gold embroidery, of which she was very proud, as it made him look picturesque. Finding that he had left this at the Vicarage, Harrick took the cap which one of the workmen had left behind, pulled it over his ears, and turned his back against the sight which he could not escape.

Light footsteps and the beating of his heart told him that someone had entered the sacred precincts. For the life of him he could not resist the temptation to drop one of his tools, and bent down to pick it up. He cast a glance behind him, and caught his breath. It required all his determination to turn back and resume work.

The two ladies wore riding-habits; and as they stood in the vestry, looking at the drawings side by side, they formed a beautiful contrast. It would have been difficult for anyone else to decide who was lovelier, or which was the more graceful figure; but Harrick saw only one, and turned away, thrilling and all aglow. They examined the drawings with some care, and entered the church. The workman continued his task, nor made the slightest movement of the head, when they advanced to look at his handiwork. They were evidently under the impression that he was one of the masons, for Mrs. Bell said half audibly,

"I wonder where Mr. Harrick is. I want so much to ask him about the organ."

"He is gone to Bircham, I daresay," said Eugenie indifferently.

"I wonder whether this man knows. Why," exclaimed she laughingly, "it is Mr. Harrick! Whatever has made you put on these clothes, Mr. Harrick? I thought you were one of the workmen."

"So I am," said he gravely, "and I always work in this blouse. All artists do."

"But you don't mind coming down from your lofty throne for a moment, to look at this organ?" said Katherine. "I want to know whether it ought to be moved. Mr. Barringer said he thought not."

Harrick put down the chattels, pulled off the blouse, and throwing the dirty cap in a corner, shook his locks, and came down the ladder. Mrs. Fairfax had walked a few paces towards the vestry, and answered his bow with a very distant nod. Katherine smiled and held out her hand. .

"I heard all about your great exploit at Bircham," said she, "and I am sorry I did not go there in the carriage."

"You will follow me presently, I daresay," interrupted Mrs. Fairfax, moving towards the door.

"Why, my dear friend, my dear sir!" cried the voice of the Vicar from the western portal, "where have you been? Mrs. Prim tells me she heard you leave soon after sunrise, and you have not been to the house since. What have you been living on? You have been at work over six hours—come, this won't do. All excess is weakness—six hours is excess—therefore——See, I have brought you something to eat and some wine. You had better put your cap on, for it is very drafty here."

"Why, uncle, what do you think; we actually found Mr. Harrick up there, working in a smock-frock! I thought he was one of the masons," said Katherine.

"Why, my dear young lady," replied the Vicar, "you don't think artists can pull dirty stones about and keep their clothes as neat as this

without something of that sort? Where were you last night? I have not seen you since I have come back, and I have ever so many messages from Maud. Mr. Harrick, I told my servant to bring your lunch into the vestry."

"I am much obliged to you," said Harrick, who had seen the train of a riding-habit disappear through the door; "but I had something from the men, and I am not hungry." He felt sick and utterly weary, and wanted to be alone and go on hammering away at something until he should have regained his composure. What did it matter what he hammered at, as long as he could keep that voice out of his ears, and see something besides that face?

"Why, goodness me!" exclaimed the Vicar, looking at Harrick. "You Londoners don't seem to flourish in the country. There's your friend, Mr. Barringer, I met him just now; he was walking alone as if he were very ill."

"Did he?" said Harrick, with a smile, and glancing at the fair lady opposite to him, who blushed scarlet at the Doctor's words. "I am afraid, poor fellow, he is very ill; but I am sure he would be worse anywhere else."

The fawn-like eyes settled upon him for a moment with a reproachful expression, and with a shrinking silent motion, she took the Doctor's arm and walked away.

"Poor fool!" muttered Harrick to himself. "I laughed at him, let me laugh at myself. Come wine and work."

He uncorked the bottle and emptied it with eager, thirsty draughts. He had eaten very little since rising, and the wine revived him. The cold pie disappeared miraculously, and the young man rose with a smile. There was work to do, and plenty of it, and he felt that he was the man to do it; and, yet it was very odd that Mrs. Bell should know all about his speech at Bircham without having seen the Doctor. Barringer knew nothing of it, and who could have told her, unless somebody had heard him and seen him unseen. The Vicar came in a few hours afterwards, and insisted on his stopping work. It was a lovely afternoon, and the interruption was not unwelcome.

"I must have some more talk with you," he said, "for I confess you have interested me exceedingly; and as a much older man, I may take the liberty of making a friend of you."

"My dear sir," said Harrick, seizing his hand with warmth, "I am proud to have your confidence."

"First of all, I want to have your opinion about a statuette of Cupid, which is supposed to have come from the Athenian temple. Mrs. Fairfax has often asked me about its antiquity."

"I would rather go straight home," said Harrick;

"I don't care to go to the house. Really, I am tired, and no antiquarian."

"Never mind, you ought to see this," said the Doctor, and nothing short of positive refusal would bring him off his idea. Harrick must and shall see Cupid, as if he had not made the little mischief-maker's acquaintance before, forsooth! They approached the house by another avenue, and came upon the extensive lawn at the back. The ladies were sitting under a tree in a gipsy tent, which Mrs. Fairfax was so fond of constructing. She herself was reclining on a settee, languidly reading a novel. The entire scene vividly brought back to Harrick's mind the moment he had first seen her at the Cottage. He sighed and clenched his teeth. Must he again be drawn into her presence? The Vicar left him and crossed the lawn, to ask the mistress of the house whether she would give her permission. The fair mistress dropped her novel languidly, yawned, and said she had no objection; but Harrick's ears caught the slightly sharp accent, "You know, I don't like strangers, as a rule." The Doctor returned, evidently somewhat mortified, and Cupid was inspected with less care than that troublesome youngster deserved.

On their way to the Vicarage they picked up the erratic Barringer. He was evidently in brighter temper, and showed some excellent sketches which he had taken during the day.

"I scarcely know what to do with this," said the young artist, somewhat embarrassed; "I would give it you with pleasure, though it was only intended as a model for Mrs. Bell to copy."

It was a charming water-colour picture of the glade they had so admired—taken with the early sunlight. The Vicar, who was struck by its beauty and finish, promised to have it framed, and to make a present of it to his niece; whereupon Barringer timidly asked whether anyone would be offended if he took the east view of the house as a companion picture. The Doctor was sure nobody could be offended, and Barringer became the happiest of men, and took such lively part in the conversation that he astonished even Harrick. All three had travelled, and as they had not only seen but studied the fairest works of nature and of art, they roamed across Europe in imagination. The conversation was interesting, for what all had seen, each had seen at different periods and under different aspects; and while Harrick had generally lived under the shadow of some great monument, and knew its details, the Vicar had followed its history through the ages that made it a link with races dying or already dead. He was a perfect storehouse of ancient lore; and if his passion for reducing everything to mythological origin was at times somewhat amusing, so were his anecdotes. They sat talking in the fragrant arbour till the heavy dew chilled

Harrick, and compelled him to go indoors. He felt tired, and was glad, for he dreaded a long sleepless night, with no companions but his own mad thoughts.

Repose came. He willed it, and he triumphed. He woke with his wonted brightness, and went to work in the cool morning with the firm resolution to bring his investigation to a close that day. When he had almost finished his work, he saw upon an old tablet in the wall, an inscription in ancient gothic characters, which he felt curious to decipher. The tablet was behind the tombstone of an abbot, and as he knelt down and was scraping off the dirt, he was not aware of approaching steps until they were close by him. Then he heard the voice, and, lifting up his head, saw the two fair figures again at the column which he had abandoned.

"It does not seem a bit further than when we saw it yesterday," said Katherine, looking through her glass.

"It is no further," said Eugenie, quietly. "Nobody has worked at it since."

"What a pity!" mused Katherine. "It would have been so nice if you had seen it quite finished before you went back."

"Oh, I don't care very much," said Eugenie, carelessly. "It's the Doctor's fad, you know."

"But you will see it in a week's time?"

"Oh, no," said the mistress of Beecham. "These sort of men always take care to make long jobs of these things."

Harrick remained in his stooping position till they had gone, and then threw away his tools. He rolled up his blouse and shook the dust off his feet with a feeling of exultation. He was free now—his work was done. He would go back to London with a clear conscience, and nothing on earth would drag him back to this sweet hell. He felt that he could not hear many more such words and remain sane. His brain could not stand it. He must away—back to the great city, and hard work, and fighting, and triumph, and forgetfulness.

It had been arranged on the previous night that the Vicar should accompany them to the heath, where the celebrated Druidical remains were to be seen, and the walk proved delightful. The scenery of Hopshire was as fair as any in the kingdom. Dark woods, grassy slopes, valleys of waving wheat, clustering trees, fragrant quickset hedges, narrow confidential lanes and broad hard white roads succeeded each other, and the heath teemed with a winged population of its own. Barringer was so charmed by its wildness that he lingered to make a sketch, and the Vicar, wishing to show Harrick some other point of interest, arranged that they should return by separate ways. As they went

along, the worthy antiquarian indicated point after point of interest.

"Now this is the hill," said he, "where Alfred the Great is supposed to have beaten Guthrum."

"What reason have you to think it is here?" asked Harrick.

"From the description we have of the ground. The Danish camp was on the slope of a hill, facing the East, as Danish camps always were. At the foot there was a river. There it is—the Thone, then called Thowan. Again, it says they lay between forests of birch and beech. There they are. And Alfred, afraid to make a noise, went with his followers into the water and along it."

"Only with part of them," interrupted Harrick. "The other part, if you remember, came round by a rock of chalk, as it is called."

"That's perfectly correct," exclaimed the Vicar. "But, pray, how do you know that?"

"I read it as a boy in an old volume," said Harrick, smiling, "which contains the description; and I was charmed with it."

"Is it very old?" asked the Doctor, eagerly. "Could you let me see it?"

"I will gladly make you a present of it," said Harrick. "It is partly print, partly manuscript on vellum."

"Oh, I will buy it of you with pleasure," said the antiquarian.

"I can't sell it," said Harrick, with a slight laugh, "for it is an heirloom—the only one—of our family."

"An heirloom," repeated the Vicar, "in your family? And, pray, for how long?"

"For many generations," replied the young proletarian.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HARRICK'S STORY.

"For many generations," slowly repeated the Vicar, regarding his companion attentively.

"You do not consider it quite impossible," said Harrick, "that working-men should have generations?"

"Not at all," answered the parson; "but I wonder you should give away anything so valuable."

"That is why I give it to you, who can appreciate its value. It has no value for me."

"No value!" exclaimed the antiquary; "a book that has been handed down through generations, and is older than printing?"

"My dear sir," said Harrick, smiling at the old man's fire, "as I shall probably never marry, and am the last of my name, it would get into other hands at my death—it may as well go into your collection. Besides, I have done with it. Its antiquity is no recommendation to me. I rather suspect a thing that is old."

"You are wrong, young man," said the parson gravely; "all our wisdom comes from the ancients."

"Very little of it, I think," replied Harrick; "the learning was theirs. Wisdom and science are ours."

"Nay; has the wisdom of legislation improved since the days of Moses?" asked the parson.

"I submit," answered the artist respectfully, "that modern laws are framed on Roman models only, and they are much more recent."

"That is possibly true as regards mere penal enactments," argued the Vicar; "but as regards the philosophy and science of life, have they advanced a step since the days of David and Solomon?"

"The science of life undoubtedly has," said Harrick; "since we have more equal distribution."

"That is spoken from the point of political economy, which I despise," said the Doctor. "I mean the higher science of life—that which deals with our immortal soul and its future. Is there anything finer in all philosophy, in all science, or art than this—'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He restoreth my soul, and leadeth me beside still waters.'"

"As poetry it is sublime," said Harrick, somewhat troubled; "but I never looked upon it with your eyes. I cannot."

"Let me hear why not," said the Vicar. "Speak to me frankly. I myself have doubted."

"You ask me whether the science of life has improved," said the young man slowly. "Well, perhaps not; but what then? Does man himself improve under the old doctrine? Look at David. Seldom has a great king been guilty of more atrocious deeds; but we know that such deeds are done by other men around us every day. In other words, mankind is now exactly what it was then. Now, sir, I ask you, is the human race improvable or not? If it is, what can you say of that science of life which leaves mankind utterly unimproved after three thousand years."

"But I deny that the race is improvable," said the Vicar. "We claim that quality for the individual alone."

"And I claim that quality for the race," said Harrick proudly. "I believe that greater deeds can be and are done by an educated race than by natural ability only. Raise a nation, and you raise its men."

They had entered a somewhat distant portion of the park, through a secluded lodge, inhabited by a gamekeeper. It was a most sylvan country, the branches of the trees nearly touched them, the shade was almost as dark as night, and there were no roads, but only grassy winding glades, cut through the woods for the keepers. As they

proceeded they suddenly began to ascend a somewhat steep slope, passed by a charming little waterfall that fell along the side of a chalk cliff, and, to Harrick's surprise and delight, found themselves on a terrace from which a sublime view of the district could be obtained. A few steps led them to a second higher and larger terrace, surrounded with copse-wood, at the end of which Harrick beheld a charming little house. There were beds of exquisite flowers, seats in shady corners, and his ear detected the sounds of a fountain within. He looked round with amazement. Far away the sun had set, and the intervening country was flushed with ruddy gold. The evening was still and delicious.

"This seems like the temple of some ancient goddess," murmured Harrick, throwing himself on a seat.

"It is what Mrs. Fairfax calls her hunting tower," said the Doctor; "I would not have presumed to bring you here, but that I knew her to have left for London. Her husband built it, he scarcely knew himself what for, but she has made of it what you see. It is her sanctuary. Nobody has been in it except Andrew. What she does there we do not know, but she has a private approach from the keeper's lodge which we passed, and she spends many hours here in solitude."

"And solitude in this spot would be welcome," said Harrick sombrously. "I could fly from the world to this abode."

"He who flies from the world," said the Vicar, "should fly to something higher—to God. My dear Harrick, you are young and ambitious and talented. Would to God I could show you the folly of trusting in man."

"What else can I do, sir?" replied Harrick. "When you say trust in God, do you not mean that I should trust in man actuated by divine motives?"

"Nay, not in man," answered the Vicar, "but in the Holy Spirit which works in him."

"Mankind," said Harrick pensively, "is filled with many motives, and with that intense desire for truth, honour, and honesty, that love of what is pure and noble and spotless and great. Would you not call that divine? Is not that a holy spirit?"

"Ah, my young friend," sighed the Vicar, sadly, "you will find out your delusions too late."

"Doctor," cried Harrick, gazing with wistful eyes upon the west, and stretching forth his hand, "that great light of heaven has faded from our sky, and now sheds his light on other worlds. When he returns he will not shine upon the same earth. The season will have advanced, the crop ripened, the husbandman will change his tools,

and the sun himself will be different—and shall not we? The time has come when the husbandman must change his labour. What has been, has been; even your old doctrine alone is no longer sufficient. The religion of David and Solomon left the human race where it was: and could it ever have become the creed of the world. What has in all ages most developed the human mind? Interchange of thought. What most develops interchange of thought—reading; and what most develops reading—printing? Christianity was fourteen hundred years in the world before that art was discovered, and when it was discovered the Church arose to persecute it. She exerted her utmost power to crush the higher human intellect born of it. Our new era begins with the discovery of that art, and see what gigantic strides humanity has made since then. It has lifted the people out of serfdom, periodical famine, and perpetual want.”

“And has left them no better,” interrupted the Doctor. “What do you think this weak and pitiful principle of human intellect will do? What can it do?”

“That has never been tried, because it has never been understood. Our aim is to raise the entire race to a high intellectual equality; to make labour less irksome, and luxury less easy; to force each individual into a loftier state of

public morality, and to stamp out the blot of pauperism, which has been directly fostered by the Church."

"And do you imagine that this ideal power of human intellect is strong enough to inspire man to great or good actions?" asked the Vicar.

"It has done so. It inspired the mightiest, poorest, and most glorious of men."

"And what," exclaimed the Doctor, "does their life teach you? Incessant labour, painful study, studious correctness, without devotion, without love, without cheer, and a death melancholy enough to sadden every subsequent philosopher."

"And yet," said Harrick, "they were inspired with a holy spirit. Their life was pure, their morality sublime, their teaching profound; and as one who has sat humbly and diffidently at their feet, I would be influenced by the same spirit. It glows in me, and I feel it could prompt me to the best deeds my nature is capable of."

"Strange youth," said the Vicar. "How came you to all this? You a workman, and poor? Tell me something of yourself."

"When you pointed out to me just now the site of the Danish camp," said Harrick, after a moment's silence, "I had an odd feeling as I mused that my forefathers must have stood there. Do you know that I descend from the Danish Vikings, and, what is infinitely more creditable,

that for five hundred years my forefathers have been able to read and write? When I was in Copenhagen, I had a letter of introduction to the Minister of Fine Arts, Graf Arrick von Tjortenstjön, and he was struck with my likeness to some of his old family portraits, and he asked me whether I had any records of my family. I had none except tradition, myself, an iron ring with the words "*Ælfred ad Arrick,*" and this old book, in which each head of the generation has inscribed his name and those of his children. The first inscription is "*Harrick ye Dane, a free yeoman of Hopshire, Anno Do. 1312.*" There is a tradition that my forefathers held land here once; and I was curious to see whether, perhaps, some of them might be buried in the Church. But our family must have gone down slowly for centuries; certainly for the last half-dozen generations we have been poor, very poor, I don't know how poor. My father was a carver in wood; and as I first remember him, he was in Paris, employed by some firm, and living in Belleville. I told you he was a great friend of Cobbett's in his earlier days, and, like him, fond of study. He used to read me his speeches and articles when I could scarcely walk, and took me to Republican meetings very soon afterwards. When I was twelve years old, there came the *coup d'état*. My father seized a gun to defend a barricade. I slipped out of bed, and

went after him. He was severely wounded, and carried home by Ververt. I see him now lying on his bed, slowly bleeding to death. We all wept; his tears flowed because the people had lost and the tyrant had gained the battle. My little hand was in his, and I felt it growing cold. 'Warren,' said he, 'do not weep. Think that I have died like a great man; and remember this, when you grow up, that you can best avenge your father's death by making barricades impossible. Learn a trade that will keep you in decency, so that you can be independent. Read, study, and digest all great men's works (for all great things come from God); but, above all, learn to be a good speaker, lead men's councils, and let it be your endeavour to make them industrious, sober, honest, and thoughtful. And, my boy, never oppose the executive power, unless it does what it did this day, threaten both law and liberty. Then, as I did to-day, die for them.'

"I could not weep; my eyes were dry with sorrow. I sat by the bed like an old man, and inwardly resolved never to forget his words. He was buried stealthily, and a collection was made for my mother and sisters, to send them back to England, where our relations were living. I refused to accompany them, and remained in Paris with Ververt, who taught me the first

lessons of art before I could write. I had grown ten years older. I had no pleasure in boys' games. I understood everything the men around me discussed. I learned reading very quickly, and eagerly devoured every book I could get hold of. I went everywhere with Ververt, and, as far as I remember, understood the great principles they discussed better at fifteen than I do now. Then Ververt was exiled for taking part in some revolution, and wandered through Europe, and I with him, going wherever he went, and learning what he could teach me. We parted and lost sight of each other for a time, and I wandered alone. I would have returned to London to support my mother and sisters, to whom I wrote frequently, but they told me in their bright and cheerful letters that it was not necessary; they knew how passionately I desired to study the old masters in Rome, and I was just then in the great city, and they begged me to stay. One of my sisters was married; and they wrote me they had found work that kept them in sufficient comfort. I believed it, and remained in Rome. Shall I ever forget that time? I had never followed any master's routine—I never could. I worked everything out slowly for myself, and although I had a most minute knowledge of theory—I was so unaccountably clumsy in manipulation, that some of the sculptors would scarcely employ me, and I was for a time

reduced to penury, but as happy as the day was long. I lived in the midst of a colony of foreign workmen and artists who were as poor and as happy as I; and having mastered French, German, and English, amidst my father's companions in Paris, I was one of the most welcome and useful wherever I went. Under that cloudless sky, and on the banks of the Tiber, I spent two years that seem to me now like a waking dream. I might have remained there for ever, had I not been rudely recalled to my duties by some friend who joined us from London, and who told me that he had seen my mother and sister, and that both appeared to be very ill. Their letters, which had been of late somewhat short and less cheerful, lent colour to the report. I wrote at once, imploring them to tell me the truth; but, though I waited anxiously for a reply, it came not. Then without a moment's hesitation I gathered together what money I could and hastened to London.

“My worst fears were realized. I found my mother and sister living in wretchedness and misery for my sake. My elder sister, Hilda, was indeed married, but to a non-commissioned officer in the Carabineers. She ought to have known better, for her husband died in battle. She fell ill at Southampton when she heard the news, and before my mother could get there, she had gone with her baby to the workhouse and died there. What I remember of my other sister, Gotha, was

that she had beauty, and, now that I have come to realize what beauty to a poor girl means, I say dangerous beauty. She was as fair as if she had been cut out of marble, with jet-black hair and blue eyes; and as true and pure-minded as she was beautiful. She had received many tempting offers to go on the stage, but shrank with horror, not from the stage, but from its pollution. She had the soul of an artist; and she might have grown into a great actress, but consumption, the scourge of England, seized her before she was fully developed. And these two, knowing that I would have renounced my travels if I heard of their poverty, pinched and worked hard day and night, and wiped the tears from their eyes that they might not blot the paper on which they wrote me their cheerful letters.

“I was utterly shocked when I saw them. They were living in one room in Lambeth, and working for an outfitter. My sister was already too ill to leave the house; and my mother, who had turned grey, crept slowly along the street with her work. I met her thus the evening I arrived in town. I did not recognise her at first; but as she stopped, and silently stretched out her arms, I fell upon her neck and wept sorely. I could not believe it—I was horror-struck. I went out next day to find immediate work; but English masters, hearing I had never done any English work, and

had served no apprenticeship, refused to take me. I ran from one to another, until I was nearly distracted; but I saw that I could do scarcely anything that was useful to them. Then I wandered to Thamestone, where Mr. Mason has a place. I had tried him twice in London, but he was out. He now looked at me in his hard, distrustful manner, and engaged me for a week. I was relieved, and carried home the money which he had advanced. I found my sister dying. She had lingered to see me, and now with her arms round my neck she whispered into my ear that she was going to join her father and Hilda. Poor Gotha! I besought her to live for my sake. I bought wine and other delicacies, and she got a little better. Filled with hope and grief, I went to Mason and prayed him to advance me some more money, for I was determined to get the best advice in London. The hard man had seen my worth, and offered me generously to enter his service for ten years, on a written contract, at a rate beginning with thirty shillings, and he would advance me ten pounds. Not knowing the danger of the English contract law, I felt touched by his generosity, signed, and hurried away with the money. I took a cab, and brought Sir John Brussell back in it. He shook his head, and did all that science could suggest, but in vain; my sister died. Then, weary with watching, and feeling that she too had run her course, and had out-

lived her time, my poor mother laid herself down. She would fain have lived to cheer me. I took her into the healthier country; but she waned. Her eyes looked into mine with sadness when we both knew that she too was going, and a few days afterwards I wept to find myself alone in the world. Not a friend, not a relation, and those whom I loved had deliberately suffered for me until their poor strength gave way. Oh, sir! if you think ill of humanity after that, you know it not."

There was a momentary silence. Harrick pressed his hand to his eyes, as if to disturb the painful picture he had drawn.

"And when you saw yourself alone," said his companion, "alone in the vast city, did you not find that, with all his intellect, man, after all, is a poor creature?"

"No," answered Harrick, "I could then have become a great artist; but Mason would not let me. He deliberately kept me down to work that paid him best at the time, and when I spoke of leaving he threatened to cast me into gaol. When I discovered what power he had over me, and that not only he, but every man in England was determined to use it against me, I well-nigh lost my reason. It was the turning point of my life. I threw myself for relief into popular life. I remembered my father's words. I became a good

speaker, and my intimate knowledge of the relations between master and man in every country in Europe gave me a great ascendancy. I have now arrived at calmer thoughts. Perhaps I can no longer become a great artist; but my ambition is less than it was, and my desire is to be and remain one of those who lead their fellow-men to greater freedom and a higher culture."

There was a silence when he had spoken. The twilight had deepened into night, and Nature itself lay around as silent as if it had listened to the affecting tale.

"You say your master uses you unfairly," said the Vicar. "Would it not have been easy for you to go to the continent, and so to release yourself?"

"Nothing easier to others," said Harrick proudly, "nothing more difficult to me. I signed a promise, and I shall keep it to the end. There are only two more years. What does it matter? I may not be a great sculptor, but art is only one phase of thought. It may be long, but it is not longer than mankind. Nobody can prevent me from becoming a great leader. I am past the years when riches were dazzling, when ambition was sweet. I can abandon wealth, and fame, and perhaps even comfort—like divine Spinoza—and live for others."

"Strange man," said the Vicar again. "Have you never known love?"

"Love!" exclaimed Harrick in a low voice, and with a somewhat harsh laugh; "what would you have me love? A dairymaid—a nursery-governess? We poets have ideals, Doctor; we can't love common wenches."

"Nay, but some pure, good, and noble woman. There are such."

"There are," repeated Harrick, pacing up and down, and sighing heavily. "Doctor, I am parched; something burns me within. Is there no water near?"

"If you dare," said the Vicar, smiling, "you may drink from yonder fountain inside; but never tell a soul that I allowed you."

The Doctor went down the steps towards the park. With beating heart Harrick approached the little house.

Love! It was her abode—the sanctuary of yonder fair goddess who had come across him like a vision. He stepped upon the threshold—a delicious, sweet, intoxicating perfume wafted around him. Heaven! what was that sound? Was it a sob? was it not the rustling of a dress? His heart bounded within him. He stepped inside, and though it was dark, he saw her as if she had stood in the noonday sun, at the open window, half hidden by the curtain, and one dear hand pressed against her heaving bosom. Her lips were compressed, her face pale, her eyes full of tears. If

he had died next instant, Harrick would have been unable to contain himself. He uttered a startled cry, threw himself on one knee, and seized her hand. It was wet with tears, and trembled against his burning lips for a moment. Then she tore it away, and there sounded in his ears the angry whisper—

“How dare you enter this place? Go this instant, and never show yourself to me again.”

He saw the flaming fire of her eye, rose slowly, and, with bended head, went out into the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

BACK IN LONDON.

NEITHER Harrick nor the Vicar were in the mood for much conversation during their homeward walk. The old man had well-nigh reached the foot of the hill before the young one had become aware that other ears than his had listened to his story, and his momentary fears that some one besides himself might know of Eugenie's presence were put at rest. The Doctor had no suspicion, and had not heard a sound. The artist mechanically followed his host, who found it necessary, in the darkness that had now set in, to lead him by the hand until they regained the broad well-defined road; but his thoughts were far away. He found it impossible to speak on ordinary topics, and, declining the Vicar's offers of refreshment, hurried to his own room.

He must be alone. His heart was ready to burst. His throbbing brain seemed to be racked with anguish and burning within him. Was he

never to be master of himself? Was he at this time of life to give way to folly? He seized a pencil and began mechanically drawing a design. The lines gradually assumed the shape of a little head—and the scene came rushing back upon him with hundredfold strength. He threw himself on his couch, and buried his face, but he saw nothing save that heavenly smile. Did he actually have that hand in his? How soft it was—how small—how supple, yet how firm! Did it not tremble against his lips? Did it linger in his for a moment, or for a thousand years?

His entire imagination, his being, seemed concentrated to that one moment, and to spread itself outward from that small centre. The world appeared too small, this narrow clay too oppressive. He lifted himself into loftier spheres, and encountered a legion of demons that howled and shrieked at him until he heard no other sound. They repeated, in maddening tones, her words in the park and the church. "I do not like strangers," shrieked one chorus; "these sort of men," yelled another diabolical host; "how dare you enter this place, intruder?" screamed they all; "begone beggar, impostor, begone." Yet, after all, he had held that little hand in his, and it trembled, and she was sobbing. What did she weep for? She must have heard his story—bless her—the only woman who had ever touched him, had a tender and noble heart.

He wept for joy. He would never see her again—but he blessed her for those tears.

Thus struggling with a passion which he knew to be as hopeless as it was presumptuous, Harrick fell asleep. It seemed to him that he was dragged through a sky of fire, and hurried on to the brink of a thousand giddy precipices, and always that little hand came at the right moment and drew him back. He awoke, tired and somewhat feverish, and found Barringer looking at him with concern. He glanced round the room, and at himself, and saw that he had never undressed.

"I have returned to my old vagabond ways, you see," said he, jumping up. "I am getting too lazy and indolent in this delicious retreat. This is my last day: I go back this afternoon. Do you remain here?"

"The Doctor asked me to make some more water-colour sketches, and I have accepted," answered he, with a blush.

"Why don't you propose to paint portraits all round?" said Harrick, with a sneer. "I know you would succeed with one at least. I never saw such a face and such coarse hair in all my life."

Barringer stared at him. "Coarse hair!" murmured he; "why, it is softer than silk."

"Oh, *that* hair? I did not mean that. You would never succeed there. I meant Mrs. Prim."

Harrick went down-stairs, and felt a savage pleasure in the disgust that was but too plain on his friend's face. He was in the stinging mood that morning, and he found it difficult to return the Vicar's greeting with politeness. He announced his intention of returning that afternoon, as he was now in a position to make a careful report to his employer.

"But you have not yet examined the carving of the choir screen in the crypt," said the Vicar. "It is splendid."

Harrick battled fiercely against this new temptation, but gave in at last, and again visited the Church. Once there, every incident within the last few days returned to his mind. He sat and listened, and lingered, and trembled at the sound of wheels, and started when he heard a distant voice, and grew cold and hot when there was a sound of hoofs on the road, and felt inexpressibly miserable when they passed and left him in solitude. This could go on no longer. It was worse than playing with fire; it was deliberately burning himself. He had taken his bag with him, and he savagely grasped the time-table. There was a train in forty minutes—an express, which he could catch easily. He girded his loins and went. A few yards from the door he met the Vicar. Harrick stamped with impatience, and would scarcely stop.

"I am sorry you are so eager to go," said the old man gently. "I would have been pleased to have become better friends."

"I have been here too long already, Doctor," said Harrick gravely. "This delicious leisure is not good for me."

"Maybe you are right, though it belongs to the Eternal Why that kindred spirits should meet only to separate. I shall be in London presently, to prepare for my Italian journey. I trust you will come and see me. I stay with my friend Sutton, in Mount Street, Grosvenor Square. Do you know him?"

"If it is Mr. Launcelot Sutton, of Genthorpe. I know him as a kind-hearted and honest-minded gentleman."

"Good old Launce ! that he is. Well, do not forget. I shall be glad to see you. We must have another talk."

The worthy old Vicar detained him for a considerable time in assuring him of his sympathy, and when at last Harrick escaped he found that he could only just catch the train by a very smart walk. He sped along the road, heeding little except the distance he had to perform. He was trying not to think, and in so doing failed to hear. There was a carriage coming up behind him at full speed, evidently *en route* for the station, but he heard it not, and just as it swept round a

corner, he left the foot pavement to cross the road. The flying horses brushed past him, and the expert coachman jerked the carriage violently on one side, but not before the hind wheel had grazed Harrick's foot. The vehicle shot a hundred yards onward ere the frightened horses could be controlled, and the groom could jump off the box to see whether he had been hurt. Although the pain was intense, Harrick, as by instinct, summoned all his strength, and walking perfectly erect, cried out that there was no harm done.

The groom seeing him apparently unhurt, remounted, and the carriage sped on.

Not until it was out of sight did he turn to the side of the road and examine his foot. It was badly sprained and painful, but after he had bathed it in a rill hard by, and carefully bandaged it with his handkerchief, he found that he was able, though very slowly, to continue his walk. But it was nearly an hour before he got to the station. The express had gone, of course, and the next train which was due would take nearly two hours to get to London, and land him there when it was growing dark. It was unfortunate, but in his present state of mind scarcely of very much importance. As he sat waiting, two farmers by his side exchanged notes.

"Thy be caddle, thy be, Tommy. There's nowt like 'em in Hopshur," said number one.

"Thy cum vlying along 't road, and myledddy zteps out like a queen, and thy be vlying back again, like lightnin'," said number two.

"And she be ill-like, thy say," said the first. "She looked mighty pale, and that trembling she had to lean on 't groom's arm as she ztepped into 't waiting room. Poor leddy!"

The train, already late at Beecham, lost time on the road, and crawled and lingered with much shrieking, and sobbing, and snorting, as if it were afraid to enter the great city. Harrick felt intensely irritated and somewhat feverish, but in his walk to Cherry Gardens the din and rattle of life sounded like music in his ears, and, but for his foot, would have felt a pleasure in being jostled. But a more than usually eager gentleman nearly threw him over, and elicited a sharp and cutting reproof. The other turned.

"By Jove, Harrick!" said Mivor, "you have got into a temper, old file. What's the matter with your foot?"

"Sprained it," answered Harrick curtly, and refusing the proffered arm. "You must have been in a great hurry, to nearly throw a cripple."

"It takes such a time to get round a man like you," retorted Mivor. "I have just come from a meeting of Metropolitan Democrats, as they call themselves. I'll give them a couple of columns that'll wake them up."

"I am afraid your columns won't do it," said Harrick; "but they want waking up sadly."

"Oh, you think that, do you?" laughed Mivor. "You are a rum file. First you spend your time in putting down demonstrations; and then you go down to the country and actually encourage them, when it is too late."

"Who says it is too late?" said Harrick sharply. "It is the very best time."

"I begin to think that you are acting without a fixed aim," said Mivor loftily.

"Poor fellow!" replied Harrick with a laugh; "you speak as if you attempted to understand these things."

"Well, if we do not understand them, I should like to know who does," cried the reporter.

"We being the 'Weathercock,' I suppose?" asked the artist calmly.

"We being the press in general."

"The press in general," said Harrick coldly, "understands very little, and the lower limbs nothing, of the questions of the day."

"'Thou art beside thyself,'" quoted Mivor; "'much learning doth make thee mad.'"

"I am not mad, noble Mivor, but thou art a heathen. Never forget that you are useful but slender scribes; that you can photograph, lithograph, stenograph, and telegraph a thousand columns after a thing is done. As to preparing it judiciously, you should leave that alone."

"Your imagination is too powerful," said Mivor angrily. "When I become editor, I'll think twice before taking you on my staff."

"It is not a journalist's habit to think twice on any subject," replied Harrick. "Besides, you must leave one man disengaged to read your paper. Good-bye."

Mivor walked off rapidly, feeling that, like De Quincey, he could have answered his opponent in Greek. Harrick slowly continued his way, wondering whether this acerbity of temper was perhaps the forerunner of some mental disease he had heard of. He arrived at Cherry Gardens thoroughly wearied. The lower door was open, and as he entered it he heard Lizzie starting up in the kitchen. There was a smell of tobacco in the house, and the sound of glasses and friendly, convivial voices came down from the "first floor front." The girl met him in the passage cheerfully, but both she and her mother seemed somewhat depressed, especially as Phidias at that moment laughed loudly up-stairs.

"You are lame and in pain," cried Lizzie, as the kitchen light shone upon him. "Have you been hurt?"

"Nothing alarming," said he kindly, for her warm voice did him good. "Who is that up-stairs?"

"Our new lodger," said Mrs. Phidias. "He has

got Mr. Barringer's rooms—he seems a quiet respectable man.”

“But such a strange, odd manner about him,” said Lizzie. “He says he is a farmer who has stone quarries on his farm. I am almost certain I have seen him at Mason’s—and I dislike him.”

“Is he a stout man, with a florid face?”

“That is the man—and he has got such a nasty prying leer about him, and his name is Tagson.”

“Lizzie, woman,” said Mrs. Phidias, who had been bustling to make him some tea. “You should not speak so harshly of a person you do not know.”

“If it is the same man I have seen, Mrs. Phidias,” said Harrick, “Lizzie’s description is not too severe. How good you are, Mrs. F.,” said he, pressing her hand as she put some tea before him. “It’s like coming home. Well, and how are we getting on, Lizzie?”

“Oh, splendidly!” said Lizzie. “Monsieur Ververt is so kind to me—he will come in and read French with me for half an hour. And Steinman and Jean Pierre told me this morning that they are collecting money for a whole set of brass utensils, and I actually have a surplus of nine and sixpence. I was going to write to you about that, because Monsieur Ververt said you would probably remain at Beecham as long as you could.”

"Did he?" muttered Harrick. "Were you there when that lady and gentleman called?"

"Yes. I saw them pass to the studio, and I never set eyes on such a lovely dress as the lady had on, and such a sweet bonnet."

"Was Mason with them, when they went in?" asked Harrick, stirring his tea slowly.

"Of course—and I remember now that he was very angry with Ververt for telling the lady that the cast or mould or something she had dropped or broken was not worth anything, because he was going to put it in the bill. Why, what is the matter? Won't you come and see my books."

"Not to-night, child," said Harrick gravely—but noticing her look of disappointment, he added, "I will later on, but I have some letters to write, and my foot is rather painful. Let me take up some hot water. Thanks."

He went up-stairs to go to his room, and, as he had expected, was called in by the master of the house. He felt a strange desire to see the new lodger, and responding to the call, went in. He recognized the stranger at once, as the man who had run up against him some days ago. The pair had evidently been confidential together. There was an odour of cigars about the room, there was an empty wine-bottle on the apologetic sideboard, and the gentlemen were at present

consoling themselves with "brandies hot," and long pipes. Phidias patronisingly took Harrick by the shoulder, and with a lofty wave of the hand introduced him to his friend Tagson, adding that Mr. Tagson much desired to make his acquaintance.

"That's easily done," said Harrick, shaking off the too familiar hand, and nodding distantly.

"I am proud, sir," said Mr. Tagson. "I have heard so much of you and your wonderful abilities and genius."

"Did you never hear that I despise flattery?" asked Harrick sternly.

"So do I," exclaimed the farmer; "but I was honest, sir. You'll be my great example as you are my theme. Won't you partake?"

"No, thanks;" said the artist; "I have some work to do."

"Oh, Harrick, my boy," cried J. F.; "cheer up, lad. Wake up, boy. It is too late for work. Let's all be friends."

"You are a farmer, sir?" asked Harrick, fixing his grey eyes on the new lodger.

"Yes, sir," said that worthy cheerfully, "I belong to the labouring swains."

"I have just come from the country, and a man told me that his sheep were dying for want of turnips. Do you think a collection would assist him?"

"It might," said Mr. Tagson, "though turnips is rather dear in our neighbourhood."

"What part of the country is that, may I ask?"

"Hopshire. Why do you want to know?"

"Because generally," said Harrick, with a meaning look, "turnips are considered poison for sheep at this period."

"That's quite possible," replied the farmer, without a sign of annoyance. "I am not a sheep farmer, and don't know anything at all about them. Have you been in Hopshire, sir?"

"I have just come from there."

"Anywhere's near Beecham way. Yes. Didn't you see that rather highish land—a good bit stony and rocky—on the road from Beecham to Bircham? That's mine, that is. Did you notice it as you came along? I saw in the *Bircham Chronicle* that you had been speaking there."

Harrick could not say he had seen the land.

"I daresay not," continued the farmer, "there was plenty finer places to look at. Lord, what fine places we have round about us! I was just telling Mr. Phidias, here, and going to show him some of the photographs in my album. There's the Wheatfield Estate, belonging to Earl Oatstraw. He is a real gentleman of the old type, and the Countess is the handsomest woman you ever saw. Did you see her down there, sir? No, perhaps not; that's her photo. I was always fond of the

fair sex—and that next to her is Sir John Birch's lady. She is another handsome woman, and a fine estate. Why, there's more oak on that place, sir, than we'll use in the next hundred years, I say. And the house too, as good as new. Did you go there, perhaps?"

No, Harrick had not been there. The farmer took the album and continued—

"But if you ask me which is the best of the lot, I say it is Beecham. Yes, sir; for grazing and cutting and planting, lop and crop, there's no estate like it in Hopshire, not if you go all round it; and as for the Hon. Mr. Fairfax," said Mr. Tagson, noticing Harrick's look of interest, "when he was alive, he was the most perfect specimen of a country gentleman. If you saw him riding about with his beautiful wife, Mrs. Fairfax—ah, she is a lovely creature!—I have got her here—there you are."

Harrick involuntarily seized the album and looked. He turned away with irritation.

"Ain't that like her? Oh, I have made a mistake—it's the portrait of the young lady who is stopping at the house—the clergyman's niece, and a nice young lady she is, too. Miss Bell, ain't it?"

"It is intended for Mrs. Bell," said Harrick, with another look, "but it is badly done."

"I daresay it is—but this is better, ain't it, now?" said Mr. Tagson, winking at himself.

It was indeed a splendid photograph of the fair mistress. Harrick felt as though he could have throttled the man and torn it from him ; and at the same moment he knew that he was turning red and pale, and betraying his dreadful secret. He put the album down quietly, with a great effort, said it was a good likeness, and having listened for a moment to the man's prattle, rose and went to his solitary chamber. It was not until some hours afterwards that he asked himself how this man could have obtained these photographs, and what motive he could have had in showing them. He felt beyond measure irritated at his own weakness in betraying himself thus. He would have felt more irritated still, if he had seen McTag at that moment making hieroglyphic notes in his pocket book, and whispering to himself—"Oh, Mrs. Bell, is it—and the Doctor's niece—Mrs. Bell. Ha, that was a bright idea to think of her half-sister's name. Very good, Tag, my son, very good. We have found—made a note of—and act accordingly."

CHAPTER XX.

THE ADVERTISEMENT.

THE tradition and experience of half a dozen generations had not been able to convince Mr. Mason that temper, though a most valuable quality, should be invisible; that, it might be kept but should never be exhibited. On ordinary occasions Mr. Mason found the world so ready to give way before his rockiness that he was not aware of the possession of such a quality, but when a rock of greater hardness and higher position came grinding down upon him, and threatened to split him up into fragments, Mr. Mason became somewhat explosive, and, like some chemicals, transmitted the shock he received in all directions, accompanied with considerable heat and electricity. The firm had just received a call from a bucolic friend much interested in the business, who had stone quarries on his farm, and who held a few bills, and the bucolic friend had insisted upon the necessity of looking alive and waking up, and bringing more

grist to the mill. Harrick came in rather late, for his foot had given him considerable pain during the night, and robbed him of his rest.

"Where the deuce have you been?" said Mason, angrily. "If you are trying to skulk, say so, and we will fetch you."

"Speak to me civilly, Mr. Mason," said Harrick, quietly, taking a seat. "I have done my work as best I could."

"That is not saying much," growled the firm. "You had better sit down and write out the estimate at once."

"I cannot do that," said the artist. "I told you before that I am no hand at that. I am not a contractor."

"Then what the deuce have you been doing all this while?" snapped the master. "What have you spent three days in?"

"In examining an old specimen of early English, and cleaning out the foliage of one of the richest carvings in the world."

"Cleaning out the foliage!" exclaimed Mr. Mason. "That won't do for us. We sent you down to estimate the cost of restoration."

"Very well," said Harrick, "that is the restoration. The church is in good order, but half the sculpture wants renewing and repairing, and all of it wants cleaning; and it is impossible for me to say what that would cost."

"What!" cried Mr. Mason. "We have existed over two hundred years—established A.D. 1640—and never refused an estimate. Damme, you shall give one."

"I say simply it would be very costly," replied Harrick, "as none but artists can do the work. Tell them that it would run into thousands, and that it is not worth while, as the church, after all, is very small."

"We shall say no such thing," cried Mason, savagely. "We have had too much of your pranks lately, Master Harrick. If you can clean capitals you can clean statues. Damme, we'll put you to stone-cutting yet, and give you a pound a week."

"Oh, no," said Harrick, quietly, and leaning his head against a cool piece of marble. "You are bound to give me the maximum—the magnificent maximum of three pounds a week and travelling expenses—which kindly hand over."

"There," said Mason, tossing him the money. "And now you'll go to this address—it's that Genthorpe man—and get his instructions, and go down to Thamestone. Be back by to-morrow afternoon. Do you hear? Now go."

Harrick went out mechanically, and turned into the street. For the first time in his life he dreaded going back to the small studio and taking up his copying work. He was glad to be able to travel again, and be busy, for the few hours of solitude

on the previous night had taught him that even in London his thoughts would not leave him. The address which had been given him by his employer, was that of Mr. Sutton, in Mount Street. The steward of Genthorpe was at home, ready to see Mr. Harrick, and received him with condescending familiarity. He was seated in an apartment filled with very old-fashioned, dark-grained, well-seasoned furniture; he was surrounded by a library of all the oldest authorities on husbandry, agriculture, and estate management, and his table was covered with plans, maps, and specifications. Mr. Sutton was in his element; his white kerchief seemed to have received an extra stiffness and gloss, and the brass buttons on his coat were in a high state of polish.

"Sir, I am glad to see you personally," said he, somewhat pompously; "Mr. Mason told me you were out of town."

"I have just returned, Mr. Sutton," answered Harrick, taking the proffered seat. "It was only last night, strange to say, that I left a friend of yours."

"Sir, I have but very few friends," replied Mr. Sutton, gravely; "the word means much, and is generally abused."

"Not here, I think," said Harrick. "It was Dr. Plumper, of Beecham."

"David Plumper," said the steward, with a

kindly look, "is my oldest and best friend. I expect him to-day or to-morrow."

"He said he was coming to town to prepare for his journey to Italy," said Harrick; "may I ask whether you go with him?"

"No, sir. There is nothing in Italy that could charm me. Mere antiquity is nothing to me, if not accompanied by—blood."

"I hear you are going to leave Genthorpe," said Harrick, again. "I should be sorry to see that splendid relic in other hands."

"It will depend much on the future master," answered the steward. "If he turns out to be a new-fangled *parvenu*, without blood, I leave. At present, his solicitors send me instructions, and leave me nearly *carte blanche*. That don't look like the rabble."

Harrick wondered how a man without blood would look, but answered politely, "It seems as if the new master knows your value, Mr. Sutton."

"Sir, I know it myself, and that is enough," replied the other. "I am at this moment pursuing an interesting inquiry into the antiquity of Genthorpe, which I have reason to believe is the Genista-Horpe which is mentioned in Domesday Book, and I intend writing a little book on the subject. I know you do not unfrequently write yourself, and as you are an expert in antique and ancient stonework, I should like to have your

assistance in this matter. I have not forgotten the way you handled Sir Richard. Read these papers when you have leisure, and give me your opinion on the subject. Every fact in them is vouched for. Is it not, Maud?"

A little head, with golden curls, shook itself silently in the half open door, and a pair of large, wondering, trusting, fawn-like eyes, looked straight at Harrick, and then, as for enquiry, at Mr. Sutton, who held out his hand. Harrick could not help smiling at the angel-like head, seeing which the child first shrank back, but then feeling, probably, that she could trust the stranger, came forward, all in white, and stood by Mr. Sutton. She gave another look at Harrick, and then came forward of herself and frankly offered him her hand. At that moment there flashed across him the scene in the church, where a young lady had offered him her hand; and the motion was so exactly similar, and the large eyes looked at him so confidingly, that he took the little hand in his, and said,

"Good heavens! Mr. Sutton, I never saw a more extraordinary likeness. This must be Mrs. Bell's sister, surely?"

"Sister Kate," said Miss Maud, looking up at him eagerly, "have you seen her? I've lost her, and I'm not going to get another sister."

"I have seen a beautiful young lady that was

exactly like you," said Harrick, "only a little taller, at Beecham."

"Yes; and have you seen Aunt Eugenie? You know I have lost Charley, and Brutus, and Tottomy?"

"I have seen Charley, and caught him, and given him back to your sister."

"Did you?" said the little lady, playing with his hand and looking up at him with a laugh; "and did Charley call you a rascal?"

"Yes, and he bit me very nearly," said Harrick, wondering at the child's beauty; "but he was a pretty fellow."

"Uncle Sutton is going to take me to a place where there is a pond, and fish, and a parrot, and flowers," said she.

"And a pony, too, for little Maud," said Mr. Sutton; "and we'll call him Charley."

"But I sha'n't have any sisters and aunt Eugenies to play with there," said she sadly.

"Oh, but we'll give you another nice little sister to play with. Now run away, missy, and give Mr. Harrick a kiss."

She looked at him and put out her sweet little lips with the tiniest blush in the world, and tripped out of the room.

"What a lovely child!" said Harrick; "and what a strange likeness! You say they are only half-sisters?"

"That's all, I think," said Mr. Sutton. "Same mother, but another father. In this case, certainly, the mother must have had blood, for it is plainly stamped on every feature. Plumper brought her here, knowing that my wife, who is passionately fond of children, would be glad to have her while they were travelling. I was afraid she might not take to us, but she made friends the first day, and she has twined herself round our hearts wonderfully. I should like to get her a suitable young person, a governess not too highly educated, but respectable and affectionate, who would be a companion to her, and at the same time teach her, for she is a clever little girl. I wrote to Plumper, and he answers me this morning that I had better advertise. Are you, perhaps, passing the 'Weathercock Advertising Office' this day? Would you mind handing in this advertisement? I daresay it is too late for to-morrow, but I don't think it will be more than six shillings. Thank you. Now as to these statues and stone work at Genthorpe."

Mr. Sutton took up a catalogue and plunged into business with that same pompous precision that would have looked all the better for the addition of a wig and knee-breeches. It was evident that he had taken a great liking to Harrick, for he insisted upon writing a letter of introduction to Mrs. Sutton, who had gone

down to Genthorpe for a few days, and made him promise to stop over night. Harrick was not loth to accept the invitation, for there was much in the ancient house that he wanted to inspect more carefully a second time. When he left the house in Mount Street, he found that time had not waited for him, and that he must hurry to catch the train. He consequently hurried, and never thought of the advertisement which he had promised to insert, until a certain very unexpected circumstance brought it back to his mind.

It came about in this wise. Prosperity with its golden wings had wafted an air of unusual comfort around the soul of George Phidias, and the crest of that gentleman, so long down-fallen, had in the last few days shown signs of rising. Mr. Phidias was actually in the possession of more than one sovereign: one was a dragon, dated 1822, and the other an Australian, dated 1860. He knew them, for he had studied them fondly, and he had also an assortment of silver in his pocket, which it was a continual happiness to him to be mentally dividing into fourpennorths.

Yet he only knew the amount of his wealth partly. He was dimly aware that Mrs. F. had not pestered him for money, during the last two weeks, quite as much as she was wont to do; but then there was that best of fellows, Tagson, that jovial,

genial, open-handed farmer, who had lent him something, and slapped him confidentially on the back, and told him that the days of bad luck were over, and that a man of his talents ought not to be grinding the dust.

No, indeed not. Mr. Phidias elevated his iron-grey tuft of hair, and became convinced that a man was not always to be bowled over. He had ground all day at his disgusting, degrading, and menial occupation of commercial traveller to a rag merchant, and though he had accepted sundry "goes," he despised the givers thereof. The hour had come when evening sinketh, and man naturally inclineth to melancholy. Our friend walked a trifle unsteadily, did J. F., but there was that in his military bearing that lent dignity to a slight roll, and he threw his head back, and expanded his bosom; for J. F. had found himself in the neighbourhood of Mason and Co., and he came to the sudden conclusion that he must call upon his friend Harrick, and relieve his mind of sundry topics.

Mr. Phidias had generally entered by the gateway, but finding the gateway shut, he pulled himself together, and with a few strokes at his moustache, entered by the door. As nobody met his wandering eye, Mr. Phidias advanced cautiously, one might say timidly, towards the back of the house, and so came into the kitchen. He had been in that

apartment before, and remembered it as an odd repository of dirt, grease, smoke, and Irish whisky. Now he finds it as neat and sweet as a dairy, with flowers in the windows and bright white blinds, and in front of them stands, with her back to him, instead of the Irish woman, a young person who, with her white cap and apron, reminds him very much of those pretty Lyonesse girls. She is working at something—embroidery by the look of it. This is evidently a rather superior young person. J. F. pulls himself together, remembering that he has been a council-man, and may be so again, and, stroking his iron-grey moustache, he bows as stiffly as a colonel, and says:

“I beg your pardon, my dear—h’m—my dear madam—h’m—but can you tell me——”

“Oh, goodness!” cries Lizzie, dropping her work and staring bewildered at her father, “it is my father!”

“Is it me?” says Mr. Phidias, pulling himself together. “What on earth is this, then? Lizzie Phidias, what are you doing here?”

“Oh, I was only waiting—that is, I was merely wanting to see Mr. Harrick,” answered the girl in confusion.

“And what do you want with Mr. Harrick, young lady?” asked the parent, sternly.

“I wanted to ask him about—about——”

“Fräulein, we are pought ze ole lot,” cries

Steinman, coming in at that moment triumphantly.

"And you gan ave zem doo-morrow."

"Bought the lot," repeated Mr. Phidias, "and use them to-morrow?"

"*Ja aber die sind schön,*" says Steinman, with enthusiasm; "*das ist das reine gold.*"

"Oh, indeed," says Mr. Phidias, who has a smattering of German, and a fondness for the last word; "what are they?"

"Dere is vurst a gread bodadoe steamer, and dere is a soup gaddle that'll old ten gallons."

"That will do, Steinman," said Lizzie, with strange calmness.

"Oh, put you must zee dem. I will fetch dem," says the honest German.

"It will do to-morrow, Steinman, thank you. Never mind to-night."

Herr Steinman, having a notion that something is amiss, slinks out of the kitchen, while Lizzie stands in the window, silent and biting her little teeth, and feeling her father's eyes upon her.

"Good heaven!" cried that gentleman, falling on a chair, "that I should live to see my daughter a cook."

"And why not, papa?" said she, trying to strike a blow in defence. "It is honest, and pays."

"Honest, and pays! So does selling matches! And why don't you go and take to that, girl? If

you must be a scullion you shall wait until your father is bowled over for the last time."

"Oh, don't father! Don't speak so harshly to me," said she, struggling with her tears.

"Come with me this instant, girl. Put on your bonnet, if you have one, and come away."

"Oh, no, don't let me go away from here," said Lizzie, putting out her hands imploringly. "Let me stay here. I am so happy."

"Happy as a menial, girl? My daughter happy as a scullion? You shall come with me this instant."

"But I can't, father," said she, bursting into a flood of tears. "I have got to provide for to-night and to-morrow."

"Damme!" cried he furiously; "you, the daughter of a Common Councilman, who dined with the Duke, a man of family and distantly related to the aristocracy—you a cook! I may be unfortunate and get bowled over occasionally, but I'll never disgrace my name. If you don't follow me at once, I'll fetch a policeman and compel you."

Finding after a moment that her appeals were in vain, the poor girl exchanged her apron and cap for bonnet and shawl. Her father would not even allow her to tell Ververt, but, seizing her somewhat roughly by the hand, drew her along with him. The pain brought the colour into her

cheeks, and there was a momentary light of anger in her eyes as she wrung herself loose, and silently walked beside him. She had already made up her mind not to give up that place except under actual compulsion, but she had still greater hopes that her mother would assist her, and ran to her as soon as they came in.

"Oh, mother, dearest mamma, you must help me in this," said she, putting her tearful face on her mother's shoulder.

"Mary, my dear, not a word," said the master of the house, knowing his wife too well. "Our daughter shall not be a scullion."

"Be calm, Lizzie, woman," whispered Mrs. Phidias, patting her on the back. "Pray for wisdom, child."

"But I won't be calm," said Lizzie, with a stamp of her little foot. "I sha'n't stand it. I was so very, very happy."

"Poverty may have degenerated you; but I thank Heaven I have still retained a certain amount of pride," said J. F.

"If you talk about degradation——" said Lizzie, with a flush. She stopped as her mother held up her finger warningly, and glanced towards the fireplace, where Lizzie now noticed Mivor for the first time. He looked sulkily at her.

"I am very glad that it has been discovered,"

said the young journalist. "I never liked the idea myself."

"You knew of it," said Mr. Phidias, "and you never told me. Harry Mivor, I shall not forget that in a hurry. You saw my daughter's disgrace, and never told her own father."

"It's no disgrace," cried the girl angrily. "It is honest hard work, and I am going back. Harrick will make it all right."

"And pray," said Mr. Phidias, throwing back his head, "what has that person got to do with it?"

"He will talk to you," answered she pluckily, "and he'll make you change your mind."

"Always Harrick," grumbled Mivor. "What has he got to do in the matter?"

"He has done everything in the matter," said she sharply: "he has helped me."

"Anybody would think you had gone there to please him," said Mivor.

"So I did—because I knew that nothing would please him that was disgraceful."

"Oh, that is quite a matter of opinion," said the young man.

"And you said yourself that his opinion was always very valuable," said the young maiden, whose eyes were lit up by a momentary spark of mischief.

"That's nothing to the purpose," said Phidias,

leaning back in his tattered arm-chair; "a man can't marry on opinion alone."

"What do you mean, father?" asked the girl, flushing scarlet.

"Why this—that he has got nothing else in the world," said Phidias.

"Because he has given it all or lent it all away," retorted she.

"Never mind. I won't have him come dangling after you any more, and I won't have his name dragged in every time. What is he but a clever bricklayer?"

"Phidias, be quiet," said his wife. "I won't hear you speak so."

"I shall say what I like, Mary," says the husband, still feeling that there was some authority left. "I am a gentleman, bowled over or not, and if a man should lend me five pounds, that's no reason why he should put his nose into everything."

"Now, Phidias," said his wife, seeing that Mivor was gone out of the room, "you know very well how it is. You owe him ever so much more."

"Very well, he shall have it."

Mother and daughter exchanged rapid glances.

"A man is not always down," continued the master of the house. "He's up sometimes. The days of bad luck may be over at last. There's no need to be grinding in the dust any more,

perhaps. He'll have it; and as for Lizzie, I don't know what to do with her yet. You must promise me never to go back there."

"I can't, father," said she warmly. "I must go at least once more."

"You shall not," cried he, stamping with his foot. "Do you hear me?"

"I must go to-morrow, to give notice, at least," said she, looking undaunted.

"Never," said he. "I forbid you on your peril, or I'll lock you in your room. Come along, Mivor; wake up, old boy. Let's have a game of billiards."

"No, thanks," said Mivor, who was going out of the door. "I am in no mood for play."

"I am," said the other, following him; "and I'll find some of them at pool, I daresay."

And so Mr. Phidias, having asserted parental authority, and brought back an erring child to his fold, went to play threepenny points rejoicing.

CHAPTER XXI.

TROUBLE AT MASON'S.

THERE was consternation in Mr. Mason's yard next morning, for the ill news was not slow in travelling. The wayward girl had, without hesitation, defied her father's authority, and slipped away soon after daybreak, when her parents were still asleep. She had gone to her room the previous night to have a good cry and think matters over, and she had come to the conclusion that she must go back once more, at least. She had heard her father tumble up-stairs very late, and she had laid down on her little bed without undressing, listening and watching all through the night, in the hope that Harrick might come. She fell asleep, notwithstanding, and woke with a start. It was time. She crept down-stairs on tiptoe, and listened at Harrick's door, but all was silent. Her great ally was evidently away somewhere, and she must fight alone. She stepped out in the cool morning air; the brave little thing felt that she would fight hard.

But it was sad work, after all. She did her duty mechanically, at first, and got on pretty well; but presently a tear came trickling down into the coffee, and then another; and then they came so fast that Mrs. Broom had to relieve her. And then of course it all came out in surprisingly little time, to the utter discomfiture of the good charwoman, who stood in fearful danger of setting herself on fire. Soon afterwards comes Steinman, stealthily carrying a bouquet of flowers, which he very nearly dropped into the milk-can, when he saw the tears which the two women were trying to hide. There was an ominous silence at the morning meal, for everybody had noticed that something was amiss. How it leaked out nobody knew, but during the morning it ran through the yard like wildfire, and proved so disturbing to the work, that Ververt would have become very angry, but for the fact that he was himself beyond measure disturbed.

Poor Lizzie noticed all this with deep distress; but having determined to be a brave girl, she bustled about and tried to be cheerful. Presently, however, there came into the kitchen what proved to be a deputation from the men, with the old soldier at its head. They advanced rather sheepishly, and stood whispering among themselves; while Lizzie, in her whitest of aprons and neatest of caps, was trying very hard to look like nothing at all.

"We hef gome, miss," says Steinman at last, "to say dat we hope it is not true that you are going to leave us."

"Yes, Steinman," answers Lizzie, in a very low voice, "I am afraid I must leave you to-day."

"We hef been deputed to zay, Fraulein," says the spokesman, "that if de money is not aldogeder enoff——"

"No, no; my good friend," says she, breaking out into a sob; "I'd stay here for nothing with pleasure."

"Och, Harrgot Fraulein," mutters the veteran tenderly, "don't you begin to gry. We know you are not so sdrong, and we shall pe glad to help you in durns, Fraulein, me and Jean Pierre."

"It is—not that—Steinman," sobbed Lizzie; "I must go because papa won't have me here."

"Och, *Harrgot, der alte saukerl*," cried the German, "won't he lisen to reason?"

"No, it is not the slightest use," says Lizzie, forcing back her tears, and trying to smile while she gave her hand to all the men. "I am so thankful to you all. You have been so good and kind to me, and I should so like to stay, but you must get somebody else. Mrs. Broom knows everything, and I have got my books all posted up to the day. Now, don't say any more, if you have any regard for me; because I don't want to cry again—and I shall—and it's no use."

It was clearly no use, and the men departed hurriedly. The dinner, under the circumstances, was a melancholy one. Lizzie did not trust herself to appear, and remained in the kitchen; but she could see the men whispering to each other and casting glances in her direction. Ververt did not show himself at all. He had come early in the morning, and asked her whether it was true, and whether there was no possibility of altering her father's decision; and when she had said no, he had gone away without saying another word, and roamed about silently ever since. It was very evident that he was out of sorts, and as the afternoon wore on, Lizzie became aware, instinctively, that something was brewing which she would gladly have escaped, as she dreaded a visit from her father every moment. At last, Steinman and Jean Pierre and a few of the select asked permission to come in again, the Gaul taking word this time.

"We have put together our heads, Mademoiselle Elize," said he, "and we are all so very sorry that you are going to leave, because you have made this place like a garden with a beautiful rose in it, and we did not think it right to let you go without *une petit memoire*, and we have got something together, if you will only make a choice?"

"You are very kind," muttered Lizzie, "and I don't know what to say to all this."

"We thought that perhaps you would be able

to use a few of these," says the Frenchman, somewhat awkwardly producing a dozen dainty straw bonnets. "They are the best we could find, and there is one for every month in ze year."

This idea seemed to brighten them all in a remarkable manner, for they all laughed and nodded at her; and poor Lizzie, when she saw the dozen bonnets put in formidable array on the table before her, had a great inclination to laugh too. But she felt that it would be better to refuse this gift, kind and generous as it was; and having shaken her head a great many times, and assured them that she valued their kindness very deeply, she had to run away up-stairs, for her merry brown eyes were threatening to dim. The men looked at each other in blank dismay, and were so disconcerted, that they made no remark, when Harrick suddenly walked through the passage. He nodded to them, and silently crossed the yard. Ververt was standing close by, moodily and listlessly, and utterly unlike himself. He caught Harrick somewhat violently by the arm.

"What's the matter now?" said the latter.

"A great calamity has come, *mon ami*, and it has come like what you call a stroke of thunder."

"Has Mason failed? Because that would be a calamity, indeed."

"No fear of that," answered Ververt. "It is simply mademoiselle who is going away from us." •

"What, Lizzie? Going away from here?"

"*Oui*," said the old boy, shaking his head sadly, "her father came last night, saw her and get a great rage."

"Is that all?" said Harrick, "we'll easily put that right."

"I am afraid not. She is dreadfully cut up—what you call down in her mouth, poor thing."

"Has she gone already? I did not see her in the kitchen, and Steinman looked as if he'd cry."

"She has gone to Petrello," said Ververt. "He is getting dangerous, and you must speak to him."

"Are the police after him again?" asked Harrick, with a frown.

"Not again; but he is getting violent occasionally, and growing stronger every day."

"Let's go there at once," said Harrick. They entered the house, and wandered through the huge building, diving in and out of passages, up and down-stairs, until they stopped at a small door, which Ververt opened with a key. The apartment where the sick man had been housed had in former ages served, no doubt, as some monk's cell. It was narrow and lofty, and the ample light came in through a window near the ceiling. At one end stood a truckle bed, a table with the remains of a meal, and some medicine bottles. In an old easy chair, propped up by

pillows, sat the long and emaciated figure of Petrel, with Lizzie bending over him shaking his pillows. She looked round, and her face sparkled as she saw Harrick.

"Bligh me, if that ain't Warren himself," exclaimed Petrel, trying to rise out of his chair.

"Keep where you are, Petrello," said Harrick. "Don't think you are well yet. I am told you are getting very noisy."

"I ain't so wery noisy, miss, am I?" asked the giant, squinting mournfully at his attendant.

"Not so very noisy now, Petrel," said she kindly, "but you have been, you know."

"Remember you are here at our risk," said Harrick, "and that if Mr. Mason knew it, there would be a fine game."

"They can't do nothing to you for helping a cove that can't come up to time, can they?" asked Petrel.

"But you have been wanted by the police," said Ververt, "about a week ago."

"And you ain't done nothing against them yet. Ain't you had a fling at the peelers yet?"

"No, we have not, and don't mean to."

"Bligh me, if I could have believed it," said Petrel, looking crestfallen. "Wait till I get well, that's all."

"You will have to appear to answer the charge of manslaughter."

"I'll have to appear as soon as I get better. Can't they wait for a fortnit or so?"

"No. As soon as you are able to appear you must. But we have retained Mr. Charles Overdon for your defence."

"And you're going to bail me, Warren, ain't ye? For I'm not going to be took," said the patient, with a slight return of violence. "I don't know what a cove like me is good for, but to be took and tried all over the shop. Bligh me, if we don't have a fling at 'em some day—they high uns. What have we got this here glorious constitution for? It ain't done nothing for me, and it does everything for them; and if it can't keep an innocent cove from being took what's the good on it, I ask? 'Tain't no go. Then why not have a fling at it? It couldn't do us much harm, Warren; 'tis only them as lives in big houses that can be made to give up a little, and they've got such a lot—but they wouldn't even bury the little babby, they wouldn't. They said it wasn't christened properly, and if it hadn't been for this little friend here, what the young lady gave me——"

Mr. Petrel stretched out his hand for his little friend but fell back exhausted, and his face looked pale and weary. Harrick regarded the man with pity, while Lizzie smoothed his hair and put the watch in his hand.

"You are complaining against the wind, Petrel,"

said Harrick, "and making yourself worse. Whatever may happen you must not go on like this, or we shall have to give you up. If you can't keep quiet you must go."

Harrick walked away, and Lizzie followed him. He stood in deep thought in the passage outside, and did not notice her until she timidly touched his arm. The look which he turned upon her then was so deep and fiery that she blushed, and turned down her eyes. Harrick took her hand gently.

"Poor child, have you been very much frightened by your father? We'll make it all right."

"I have been dreadfully sad," replied she, drawing her hand away. "And I am afraid you will find papa very hard."

"I think not," said Harrick, with a smile. "But what does Ververt think of the matter? He has gone away."

The veteran had walked to his own room, which was not far away. He stood in the door as Harrick approached, and sighed heavily. The young artist glanced into the apartment, and could scarcely believe his eyes. He remembered having seen it previously in a most unsavoury condition, frowning with dirt, the window so thickly coated with dust and smoke that it was almost necessary to burn a candle at midday. Now it looked quite smiling. The paper had been cleaned, the ceiling

whitewashed, the bed was snowy white, and the window-panes invisible; and outside on the sill were a dozen bright flowers. Harrick glanced at his old friend, and could not forbear laughing.

"Why, Ververt! has Lizzie laid her atrocious hands on your sanctum? Do you mean to say you allowed this?"

"She did it without my knowing anything about it," muttered Ververt.

"And you did not dismiss her! Why this is worse than Biddy Malone. This floor has actually been scrubbed."

"Monsieur Ververt," said Lizzie, putting her arm lightly through his, "*je ne vous ai pas fait beaucoup de mal?*"

"*Cent mille noms*," muttered Ververt through his teeth, and laughing forcedly, though there was a suspicious moisture in his eye, "*ça chauffe*. I am quite spoiled. Imagine yourself that I have offered Mademoiselle Elize the most honourable marriage, but she has only shake her little head and smile. *Vous comprenez ça*. She has another sweetheart."

"I know who it is," said Harrick, wondering why those little cheeks were so red. "It must be Steinman."

"*Ou ciel*," cried Ververt, "you are a fool. Yes, mademoiselle, he is a great fool. He see not the most common thing in the world; and

he go back to that Beecham and be made ten hundred thousand more fool."

"I am not going back there," said Harrick gravely; "and I should never have gone but for you."

"But you are going," cried Ververt. "I saw a letter from Docteur Plum just now, saying that the restoration was to be commenced at once, at whatever cost."

"Very well," said Harrick quietly, though turning a shade paler. "Mason must send somebody else. I won't go."

"But the Docteur he say that Mr. Harrick appear very fit for the work, and he hope Mr. Harrick will come down to superintend. *Voilà!* You go down, of course. It is a great work."

"It is undoubtedly a great work," said Harrick, puzzled by the other's bitter tone. "But I can scarcely believe you."

"Oh, of course not. *Le vieu Ververt* is a liar. *Bien!* You leave him, both of you. *O ciel* what fools!"

"I don't understand you to-day," said Harrick, putting his hand on the old man's shoulder. "You are driving at something I can't get at. As to Lizzie's going, I think that is merely a passing freak of her father's."

"I am afraid not, Warren," said the girl. "Papa has strangely altered within the last few days; and

you know neither mamma nor cousin Harry liked it. But what is to be done here?"

"If things can't be altered, we shall have to get somebody else; though where and how I really don't know," said Harrick.

"Things can be altered, I say," cried Ververt; "but they never will if we are ten hundred thousand fool. You know Mason tell me to-day he must take in another clerk or book-keeper. *Bien!* Mademoiselle can keep book as well as *ménage*. Why not propose her as book-keeper? That is perhaps *plus convenable*."

"Would you not object to that, Lizzie?" asked Harrick.

"I should prefer it infinitely to remaining at home all day," answered she. "If I could only remain here, I don't care what I do."

"I'll think of that, Ververt," said Harrick. "I hope to talk the father over; and if not, why, we'll induce him to go in for this, always supposing that Mason is agreeable. We are not such fools, after all."

"Ten hundred millions," muttered the ancient; "we are perfectly blind. *Nom de nom*."

Harrick found Mrs. Phidias in great trouble, partly at the harshness of her husband, partly at the disobedience of her child; but she frankly owned that she had never been very pleased to know Lizzie in so inferior an occupation.

"What!" cried Harrick, with astonishment; "is that my good little mother? Would you rather be poor?"

Mrs. Phidias looked down on her work and said nothing. Her husband entering soon after, she left the two men alone.

"Pardon me, Mr. Harrick," said he, looking very erect, "there is a small matter standing between us of £30, I think."

"That is the sum, I think," said the artist, looking in blank astonishment at some bank-notes his host pulled out.

"You will find these correct, I think—and I am beholden to you. The I O U's will oblige yours truly, by return. You seem astonished. There are moments when a man is no longer down; when he no longer grinds the dust."

"So it seems—and I am glad of it," said Harrick; "but I want to talk to you on a very important matter, J. F."

"Pardon me, my name is G. P.—or, better still, George Phidias—if you please," said he, curling his moustache loftily.

"Well, Mr. Phidias, I want to speak about this affair of Lizzie's."

"You are, I presume, alluding to my daughter, Miss Phidias," said the father, throwing himself back in his ragged arm-chair.

"I am ; and you know it is very foolish on your part to take her away from there."

"Pardon me, my dear sir," answered he, "I am, as regards that, her parent, and the only judge."

"But you cannot object to her doing honourable and profitable work that she likes. You must not."

"There is no must in the matter," said Phidias, looking towards the ceiling. "A young lady who has aristocratic connections, and whose father dined with the great Duke, shall not be a scullion. No, sir, never !"

"Well, there is a situation of book-keeper vacant at Mason's, let her be allowed to take that."

"Certainly not. My daughter shall be no menial. I have some pride left. And pray why do you interfere in this ?"

"Why do I interfere ?" said Harrick, "because hitherto you have starved them, and neglected them, and did your best to spoil her education, and never cared what became of her. And if it had not been for others——"

"What ho !" cried Phidias, lapsing into staginess, "this is language I cannot hear. Avaunt ! go to thine own apartments. Begone ! I have borne much from thee in my day, but this is going too far. This is my private sitting-room, sir ; do you understand ?"

"Yes, I understand," said Warren, sadly, and

putting a heavy hand on his host's shoulder. "I understand you very well; but take care, Phidias. You have been weak and foolish, and shamefully self-indulgent; may the day never come when your wife and your daughter will blush for you—because you are—guilty."

Harrick walked out of the room, and left Mr. Phidias in silent consternation. Some time afterwards he was in the little back room, his studio, in front of a clay bust, which he was slowly and carefully modelling. He regarded his work long and attentively, and seemed to try and recall something to memory. He hastily dropped a moist cloth over the work when he heard a knock, and turned round somewhat testily. But his look softened as he saw Lizzie.

"Is there no hope, Warren?" said she. "Have you spoken with papa?"

"I have, and I am afraid that Mr. Phidias is at present immovable."

"I shall never care to do anything else in the world," said she. "I shall go back all the same."

"You would not go against your father's command," said Harrick smiling. "That would not be like Lizzie."

"But why won't he," pouted she. "I'm sure there's nothing disgraceful in cooking. Alfred the Great did it?"

"Lizzie, woman, you must not always ask why,"

said her mother, who entered after her, "be patient, child."

"But I am not coming back to sit at the machine all day, mamma. I hate it, and I'd far rather do anything else."

"But what else can you do, woman? I am sure, Harrick, you don't think she ought to be idle."

"Mrs. Phidias—I lost a very dear sister at that sewing machine, and I hate it too."

"I don't want to be idle, mamma," said the girl, somewhat hotly, "and it's very unkind of you to say so."

"Well, child, I did not mean it in that sense—but you know you can't be a governess yet."

"Monsieur Ververt says I speak splendid French, as well as his daughter used to," said Lizzie.

"Gracious me!" said Harrick, starting up, "I had forgotten the advertisement. How stupid! Look at this."

He put his hand in his pocket and produced a scrap of paper, which he handed to Mrs. Phidias. She cast her eyes over it, looked at him, then again at the paper, and read, "Wanted, a young lady of good family, and fair education, as a companion and governess to a little girl. French preferred. Salary liberal. Apply, 30, Mount Street." As she read it,

there came across her face a memory of the past. Her hand trembled, and she said, somewhat anxiously,

"Mr. Harrick, where did you get this piece of paper?"

"Little mother, you look strange and anxious. Sit down on this chair. What is the matter with it?"

"It is strangely like a hand-writing I have not seen for many years."

"This is written by Mr. Sutton, the steward of Genthorpe, and one of the kindest old gentlemen in the world."

"Did you never know," said Mrs. Phidias, slowly, and still looking at the paper, "that my maiden name was Sutton?"

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Harrick. "I had not a notion. Are you a relation of his?"

"Launcelot Sutton is my brother," said Mrs. Phidias. Lizzie quietly knelt down beside the chair, and silently putting her arms round her mother, pressed her closely.

"Why, he said that he had—no, he did not say that," muttered Harrick, correcting himself.

"What did he say?" asked Mrs. Phidias. "Don't be afraid to tell me."

"He said," replied Harrick, remembering and slowly repeating the words, "'The only relation I ever had is lost to me now.'"

"Yes, we parted many years ago, when Lizzie was quite a little girl, and we have not met since."

"He must have been a very hard and ungenerous man, mamma?" said Lizzie.

"No, child; he was very fond of me, and as kind as a brother ever was. But we behaved badly to him."

"I should say he remembers you with the same affection," said Harrick. "He sighed just like that. It was at that time that he gave me the——" He stopped, remembering that the gift had passed out of his hands.

"He gave you the what?" asked Mrs. Phidias.

"Some kind gentleman gave him a guinea with a hole in it, and the letters L S engraved on one side," said Lizzie.

"Where is it? Let me look at it. I had one exactly like it."

Harrick frowned, and looked at a drawing. Lizzie blushed and faltered.

"What is it, Lizzie, woman? Speak up. Where is it?"

"I'll show it you to-night," whispered the girl, who had the precious little gift hanging on her bosom at that moment. "He gave it me to buy you some wine and delicacies. Hush! don't thank him."

"I think he will be very glad to see Lizzie,"

said Harrick. "He seemed to me the type of a fine old gentleman."

"I'll go to him," said Lizzie, clapping her hands; "and I shall say, 'If you please, uncle,'—what shall I call him?"

"I used to call him Launce—the dear boy," said Mrs. Phidias, with the light of other days in her eyes.

"Uncle, I shall say," resumed Lizzie, "Mamma used to call you Launce, and if you please may I be the governess? I don't know any history, but I'll learn it."

"But what little girl is that?" asked Mrs. Phidias. "Last time I heard of them they had no children."

"It is a delightfully pretty little girl, the niece of a friend of his," said Harrick; "a Miss Bell, a sweet little creature."

"May I go to-morrow, mamma? I should so like to teach a little girl."

"I think we will go together, child," said Mrs. Phidias, pensively. "I don't think he will be angry with me now."

"Not if I ask him to forgive poor dear mamma," said she, embracing her mother fondly.

"Yes, and you may put on your new blue bonnet and shawl, child."

"Oh, I have got a dozen bonnets now," said the girl, laughing again as only nineteen can.

"It was so very, very kind of them, and it cost me ever so much trouble not to cry again. Won't you come down and smoke your pipe, Warren?"

"No, child; I am going away to-morrow morning for some time, and have a lot to finish and to arrange. I must be alone."

"Going away!" echoed she. "For how long? Where are you going to?"

"Don't ask these rude questions, woman," said Mrs. Phidias, "Come away, and let us look at your bonnet."

The girl sighed and followed her mother out of the room.

CHAPTER XXII.

PAGES FROM KATHERINE'S DIARY.

BEECHAM, *Friday Evening.*

I WONDER what is the use of my keeping a diary. I never write in it when I ought to—I never have patience to sit down quietly and go through everything again, when it has all happened and is all over, and when I am still hoping and watching and wanting it all to come back again, and yet fearing that it will come. It's only when I am alone—alone? how odd. I don't feel alone, and yet I feel most miserable, as if I had somebody at my side that looked at me all day, and to whom I could not say a word. I wonder whether others feel the same. I am sure Eugie must, for she has been miserable enough, and she has everything she can wish. It cannot be that she is ill, for I never saw her look better than in these last few days, yet my dear girl has done nothing but mope and fret, and she tells me that I have been doing the same.

I suppose it's the excitement of that rebuilding that has put me out. I wish it was done with; and yet, what a lovely fretwork Mr. Harrick has brought out on that pillar. What a strange man he is, to be sure! I felt quite struck when I saw him the first evening. So great and strong and quiet, and so determined in his manner; and poor Mr. Barringer, so sad and gentle! I could not help trembling when I heard his voice. There is something so very different in a man's voice; be it ever so soft and low, it seems to go right to my heart, and to mean a great deal more than it says. I wonder why he is so sad and downcast, and why he looks so pale.

I thought at first that he was shy, but that does not seem to be it either, for while we were looking over the drawings in the church next day, we had quite a long chat together, and he seemed quite open and confidential. Only when he touched upon certain topics he suddenly became silent, and sighed; so I suppose he must have some secret sorrow, or something that throws a gloom over his life, as it does over mine. I am so sorry for him, for I know what it is. And yet, when he likes he can be so animated and witty and humorous, that I am sure he must have some great trouble, for when we were sketching that glade, he told me of his adventures with the Italian brigands, and how he was taken prisoner

by them, and kept amongst them for three weeks, with three other artists, two Germans and one Frenchman, and how the brigands would not let them go, until they had painted portraits all round, and made them eat dry bread and garlic—the nasty creatures!—and when the painting was all done to their satisfaction, they all had a dance in the open air, and made him dance with two of the loveliest black-eyed Italian girls he had ever seen.

He told all this so prettily and racily, that I could not help laughing very heartily, and Andrew himself grinned occasionally, though somehow he has taken a grudge against poor Mr. Barringer, though why I cannot imagine; for although he is very much marked with the small-pox, he has beautiful eyes, and a most charming smile, that comes a great deal too seldom. But I wish he would not look at me as he does, poor fellow! for I shall have to tell him, and yet I can't tell him anything until he says something, and he has said nothing except that he hoped I would allow him to finish that glade in water-colours, upon which of course I said that I did not know whether I could accept that.

What odd creatures these men are! I did not mean to say that I would not accept it; but he immediately goes and sighs and turns gloomy and miserable, and of course that made me quite as

unhappy. I wish I had gone to hear Mr. Harrick speak at Bircham instead, for Eugie came home very oddly that evening, and she was quite full of it, although she forbade me—quite unnecessarily, I think—to tell a soul that she had been there. But at first she said that she had never heard a finer speech, and never seen a crowd so thoroughly amused and swayed; but when I began to ask about Mr. Harrick's doings and what he had said, she began to run him down, and at last finished by saying that after all he was probably one of those dangerous and turbulent men that are never at rest, and do a great deal of harm in the country.

She was dreadfully restless that evening, and would go out into the park with me and Andrew, without waiting for the Doctor, whom she had sent for; and when she got to the church she would go to the organ, which she does so seldom, and play some of her weird fantasias and quaint gloomy anthems of Scarlatti's. I don't know how it was, I could not have stopped in that church for anything. I felt as if my dear friend was divided from me by thousands of miles; and I ran away into the wood all by myself, although I knew that a storm was coming; and who should I meet but poor Mr. Barringer, who seemed quite delighted.

"I knew you were not playing the organ,"

said he. I supposed Andrew had told him, but he assured me he had not been inside. He had only listened for a moment and ran away, for he knew I could not have played thus. I knew not what to say, and I did not care to say anything, for I felt so happy to think that he liked my poor clumsy playing better than Eugenie's; and I almost wished that a tremendous storm would come on, but it did not, and presently, although it was rather dark, I saw Eugenie and Andrew, and I said good-bye to Mr. Barringer. He very foolishly took my hand between both his, and begged me to stay, but I said of course not, as harshly and disagreeably as I could, and ran away and joined Eugenie, whom I found in a fine temper.

On thinking over what had happened during the last two days, I came to the conclusion that I had been exceedingly foolish and imprudent, and that the only thing I could do was to be very cold and distant to everybody, which I always find so very difficult. If I don't like a person, I don't want to speak to him at all; if I do like him, I can't bear being cold, and haughty, and distant, and reserved. There is nothing so pleasant as a smile, and nothing so refreshing as a hearty laugh. Ah, dear me! I wish we were well off on this Italian tour of ours, for this living alone is the most trying thing in the world.

Eugenie has scarcely been herself since she came here. She was fretting to get back to London, and grumbled at the stupid country and the stupid church, and everything was stupid.

And last night she went with Andrew alone to her little hunting-lodge, and was there till nearly midnight, while I was moping about alone here; and when she came in, she went straight up to her room and never came to see me. I thought she was ill, and could not bear the thought, and got up in the early morning and crept into her room, and found her fast asleep and looking so lovely, with rosy cheeks and a happy smile, but her eyes were very red, and I am sure she had been crying. So had I, for that matter; but when I knew she was happy again, I went to bed and slept soundly. She went back to London next morning, and kissed me very warmly, and said she should so like to take me with her; and it would not be long before we would start on our travels, and I was to write her very frequently, and if Dr. Plumper decided to go on with that church, I was to show as much kindness as I could to the gentlemen that were coming to superintend the work.

I felt myself blushing, and she laughed and shook her finger, and of course that made me blush all the more, though why, I do

not know; but the Doctor saw it, who was standing by, and I do not know what he thought of the matter, but when the carriage went away he hummed and hawed, dropped more than one hint about prudence and foresight, and quite frightened me by asking me to give him back a parcel which he had given me in the hall. It seemed to contain some drawings or something like that, and I asked him what they were. He refused to tell, and said they were not for me, but I insisted on knowing; and as they had been given me once, I cut the string, and found them four delightful water-colour drawings of the glade, and the house, and the church, and the heath-ruin; all signed A. B.—just the initials of that strange wandering husband of mine.

Poor Mr. Barringer gave them to the Doctor because I would not take them, and I could not very well keep them when he wanted to have them back; so I said they were very badly done, and packed them up again very carefully and gave them to him, and shut myself in my room all day; and here I am writing it all down, and feeling so cross and irritable with the whole world, that I shall have to be very careful what I say or do. But this surely can't last for ever. It must not. I shall put a stop to it. It strikes me that I have been very

foolish. I ought either not to have insisted on the carrying out of that clause in the agreement whereby Alfred can only get at the money when he claims me—I should have renounced that and left him to himself—or I should have taken some steps to find him out and have an explanation with him. Things cannot go on as they are. I must speak to my uncle.

SUNDAY EVENING.

What was it that has made me so happy all day? Was it the weather, or the beauty of nature, or was it within myself? Drove to the church in the close carriage this morning, and with a very thick veil on I went into the family pew. The Doctor preached his last sermon before his journey, and it was quite touching. I watched the congregation through my curtain, and I saw many of them in tears; and I was quite astonished to see poor Mr. Barringer in the Doctor's pew, looking so sad, and repeating the prayers and responses with so much attention, that I was quite touched myself.

I was afterwards told by Parker that Mr. Harrick had gone back on Friday, the same day that Eugenie went, and that the carriage, in suddenly rushing round a corner to catch the train, had nearly knocked him down. Thomas

thought he had hurt him, but when he stopped Mr. Harrick was walking on, and cried out that it was all right. Eugenie was dreadfully frightened, and has told Thomas that as soon as she has sent down another coachman from London he can go. Poor man, he does not know what to do with himself, and begged Martha to ask me to intercede for him. I must try and see what I can do.

My dear uncle came to me in the afternoon, looking very grave and solemn, and told me he had received a letter from our solicitors that morning, in which they state that they had communicated with my husband's solicitors, and that they had informed him that Mr. Blainville had renounced all claim; that he never intended fulfilling a compact that had linked him to shame; that he would never touch a fraction of the money, and, being able to earn his own livelihood, would hold no more communication with us, but appear at his own proper time to get a release from his bond.

They have no idea where he is, or what has become of him. He has not communicated with them for two years, except this letter, dated from Paris, in answer to one which they wrote to him a long time ago. There the matter rests. I wish I knew what was to be done. Why does he not come and see me, once at least? we might, possibly, like each other better than we imagine. And if he knew my situation, how lonely I feel, and how

I yearn for a little affection and companionship, and get none, he would have pity on me. I am sure poor Mr. Barringer would not treat me so.

I am convinced that uncle has been speaking to him about me, and quarrelled with him, and told him that it was no use, for I have heard no more of him—at least, not of him personally. I am quite positive that he must have felt very deeply hurt at my refusal of those pictures; and when I think of it now, and how I could have spent my time in copying them and trying to learn from them, it seems such a pity. But the other day—in fact it was last night—I got a big letter and which I carried up to my own room, for I felt there was something in it from him. And when I opened it I was so disappointed, for I thought it would contain a long letter; but instead of that it only contained a beautiful little picture of the church porch, with myself, as I stood that evening, holding Charley in my hand and Brutus by my side. It has the initials “A. B.,” so I suppose it must be he; and it is perfectly lovely. And then the little poem. I never read anything more touching. I am sure he will be a great poet one of these days.

I know he told me that he has studied harmony, and that he has tried to compose a song sometimes, and I am sure this reads as if it ought to be set to music.

"As prisoners turn toward the light of day—
 Joygiver to the free;
As sailors shipwrecked with their eyes do pray
 For help—for help at sea;
As parchèd cattle, water-wanting, stray
 All yearning, o'er the lea;
So does my soul turn from afar, away,
 To thee—to thee.

"The stars reflect but one most lovely light,
 And to that centre move;
And widowed nature's silent tears at night
 Her sad—sad sorrow prove;
But as she turns, all fragrant with delight,
 To her life's joy above,
So do I turn to thee—so pure, so bright—
 My love, my love."

Poor fellow! if he feels like a prisoner, and a shipwrecked sailor, and parched cattle all at once, I am afraid he must be very miserable; and I can't do anything to make him better. I think I shall burn it all, and never think of him again—that is, if he sends any more.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RECONCILIATION.

THE interview between Mrs. Phidias and her brother passed off very quietly. When brother and sister have lived within easy distance for many years, and have not even seen each other, a first meeting may settle differences; but it can only be compared to the formal exchange of credentials between plenipotentiaries who meet at a conference. They agree to be friends; the terms are to be settled afterwards. When Mr. Sutton was informed that two ladies wished to see him—an elderly one and a young one—his mind by instinct flew to his sister. He had thought of her frequently, and within the last weeks constantly. He had noticed that his advertisement was not in the "Weathercock;" and as he was not in the habit of receiving female visitors, who could it be but Mary? He was, therefore, not surprised when he recognised her in the veiled figure that entered. A little older, a good deal sadder, and he thought somewhat thinner. He rose and said in his quietest

and kindest manner, "How do you do, Mary? am very, very happy to see you;" and as he pressed a kiss upon her forehead, he noticed that the hair had turned very grey.

But when Launcelot Sutton turned from the mother to the daughter, and beheld a blushing handsome girl, with a sweet mouth that hesitated between laughing and crying, and a pair of deep brown eyes, that sparkled with mischief—the man of the past adjusted his spectacles and looked again. When his sister told him that this was Lizzie, who had been named after the great queen by his desire, he felt that the great queen might have had a worse representative, and, with his old formal politeness, was going to press a slight kiss upon her forehead as well, when Lizzie, in all innocence, put out her red lips. If Mr. Sutton had been the most useless drone in the human hive, he could not have refused to take the honey from that little flower, although he almost caught himself blushing in the doing of it; for it was a long time since Mr. Sutton had kissed a young and pretty woman."

"I thought you might be two ladies in answer to an advertisement I put in the paper," said he; "but I see it is not in."

"We have come in answer to that advertisement," said Mrs. Phidias, going straight to the matter.

Mr. Sutton again adjusted his spectacles, and waited for an explanation.

"It is a very curious coincidence," said his sister; "but the gentleman—I may call him that truly—to whom you gave the slip of paper, is lodging in our house, and has been our dearest, truest, and best friend. He forgot all about it until last night, and only remembered it because we were discussing the possibility of getting some good, decent, and lady-like employment for Lizzie. That's the story."

"Do you not think my niece had better go into the room opposite, where she will find little missy," answered Sutton; "and if they can agree, and we can agree, I don't see what else is required. My wife won't be here till three o'clock, but I don't think she will object. She has often been wanting you to come."

Lizzie quietly opened the door of the opposite room and entered unperceived. Maud was seated on a footstool with her back to the door, and her fingers in her ears, reading that most absorbing tale of the man who could not fear, when Lizzie in her quiet way knelt down beside her and looked into the book on her lap. The brown hair and the golden hair mingled, and presently the little hands went down from the ears, and the large blue eyes slowly turned round, and wonderingly looked into the large brown ones, as

if one of the ladies in the fairy tales had suddenly come to life. Little missy was evidently as highly contented with her examination as Lizzie, for with a spontaneous action she dropped the book, and threw her arms round the girl, who drew the beautiful child to her breast, and kissed her tenderly.

"Have you come to play with me instead of sister Kate?" asked Maud, looking at her again.

"I have, if you will love me a little bit."

"But you are not at all like sister Kate, nor like aunt Eugenie," said Maud; "then how can I love you?"

"Because I love you," said Lizzie, kissing the soft cheeks again. "I have no little sister, but I should like to have one."

"I don't like Aunt Sutton a bit," whispered Maud, "and I don't like Fanny, our servant. But I like you."

"They seem to agree pretty well," said Mr. Sutton, entering with his sister at that moment.

"Now Maud, here is another aunt for you—this is aunt Mary. Won't you shake hands with her?"

Maud looked earnestly at Mrs. Phidias, but made no move to advance. Nay, when Mrs. Phidias came forward, she put her arms behind her, and shrank towards Lizzie with a silent motion. She allowed the strange lady to kiss her,

but she neither returned the salute nor took any notice of her. Mr. Sutton watched it and smiled.

"Strange child," said he in a low voice to his sister; "she takes violent likes and dislikes, and nothing can alter them. The moment she saw me she ran into my arms; she has never kissed my wife since she came here, and she evidently does not take much to you. But Lizzie is all right it seems. I think that both of you had better stay here to lunch; my wife returns from Genthorpe in the afternoon, and we can arrange matters."

Matters were arranged. Mrs. Sutton, a stately woman in heavy silk, whose maternal kindness had not been soured by children, arrived in the afternoon. She received Mrs. Phidias with warmth, for she was fond of her husband, and all that belonged to him, and she seemed highly pleased that so gentle and agreeable a girl as Lizzie could be found to be Maud's companion. It was determined that Lizzie should for the present continue to sleep at home, so as not to arouse the suspicions of her father, but that at a suitable moment the whole affair should be disclosed to him. Mrs. Phidias trembled when she thought of her disreputable husband, but with that hopefulness of love that women seldom lose, she fondly trusted that it would have a good effect upon him, and be the means perhaps of reforming him altogether.


Maud took to her new sister, as she called Lizzie, remarkably well. In a couple of days they were fast friends, and with that sympathy that is born of mutual affection, Lizzie felt exactly how far she could humour her little pupil, and where it was necessary to assert a slight authority, which always made the eyes a trifle larger for the moment, but was never asserted in vain. On examining herself, conscientiously, the new governess found that she was not altogether so ignorant as she had feared. In French and English, and arithmetic, she found herself quite competent to teach; and, although history was her weak point, she felt that with her cousin's assistance, even that might be managed. One day Maud asked her, pensively, whether she had a mamma. Lizzie answered, of course, that her mamma was the lady she had seen and would not shake hands with.

"But I have not got a mamma," said little missy, "and sister has not got one either."

"That is because your mamma has died, darling," said Lizzie; "but you have had one, like everybody else."

"I don't know anybody that has ever had one," said Maud, wisely. "May I see your mamma again?"

"If you promise that you will be a good little Maud, and shake hands with and kiss mamma," said Lizzie.



Maud promised, and Mr. and Mrs. Sutton having no objection, an afternoon visit was paid to the house in Cherry Gardens. The little pupil shook hands with Mrs. Phidias, and even touched her cheeks, but it was evidently a mere formality. She sat and watched the mamma without saying a word; doubtless holding very interesting discussions with herself. At the same time mamma was evidently somewhat agitated.

"I have been very much put out this morning," said Mrs. Phidias. "Shortly after you left, who should turn up here but Mr. Barringer, in the oddest possible condition. I do not know what he has been doing, but he is a mere shadow of himself. He came home drenched from head to foot, and splashed with mud all over. He says he has been walking in the rain all night, but it looks to me as if he had been walking in the rain for a week. And he was so listless, and gloomy, and desponding, that I could scarcely prevail upon him to take off his wet clothes and have a few hours' sleep in Harrick's bed. And now he is up again, and he has been asking me to send him up a hot cup of coffee. Would you mind taking it up to him, my dear—I am rather tired—and he is sitting in the back room, where I have put Harrick's table and sofa."

Lizzie, always willing to do something, took the little tray, and Maud, who had seen enough of

mamma, went after her. She had heard Mrs. Phidias, no doubt, for she heard everything, and Lizzie wondered rather that she should have followed her, for her little pupil was rather shy with gentlemen, but she did not forbid her. As they approached the door, it suddenly entered her head that it would be, perhaps, an additional pleasure to Mr. Barringer to have his coffee brought in by such a little messenger, and so she sat down on the step and whispered in Maud's ear that there was a poor sick gentleman, and would she take the cup in to him. Maud looked pensive for a moment, and then nodded and took the tray. Lizzie knocked at the studio door, and Mr. Barringer's low voice said "Come in." He was lying on the sofa, and did not look up when the door opened; but when, instead of Mrs. Phidias, he saw something white and indefinite, he turned round sharply. His eyes fixed upon the child, who advanced with a half-bashful, half-serious air. The resemblance was too striking to be accidental. He trembled, held out his hands, and his pale face flushed.

"Good God!" he muttered to himself. "Is it possible? Can this be a delusion—or is this her child?"

Maud had advanced, and stood looking at him with her large eyes and a little dimpling smile. He took the cup out of her hands, and brought it to his trembling lips, unable to say a word,

and fearing to address or touch the child lest he should disturb the apparition. Lizzie watched the scene from the half opened door.

"For heaven's sake, Lizzie, tell me who this is," cried Barringer, noticing her. "It is the most extraordinary likeness."

"This is Miss Maud Bell," said Lizzie. "She is at Mr. Sutton's at present, but she comes from Beecham. Why, of course, that is where you have been with Mr. Harrick. You must have seen her sister, and her uncle the Vicar, and Mrs. Fairfax."

"I have. Yes, I have," muttered Barringer, still gazing on the child, and taking one of the little hands. "I hope," said he, with a gentle voice, "that Miss Bell is quite well."

Maud nodded, and came a foot nearer, without taking her eyes away from him, though she allowed him to keep her hand. Lizzie came into the room and said to her pupil,

"Why, Maud, won't you speak to Mr. Barringer, who has seen sister Kate, and who is not very well?"

"Has sister Katie made Mr. Barringer not very well?" said Maud, glancing up at Lizzie.

Poor Mr. Barringer could not resist the temptation to take the delicate little thing between his knees, and fold her in his arms. She did not resist, but the motion opened the flood-gates of his

sorrow, and he covered his face with his hands. The tears trickled through, and his whole frame was shaken with violent sobs. He became aware immediately how odd his conduct must appear, and, with a sudden movement he rose and fled into the next room to hide his weak tears. Lizzie was rather pained at the scene, and went down with Maud, guessing, with a woman's instinct, what the real cause was.

Ere she could reach the entrance-hall she paused with consternation. She had distinctly heard her father's voice. Both her hat and Maud's were in the parlour. There was no help for it. The hour of discovery had come a second time. She took her little charge by the hand, and went down firmly. Her father rose from his ragged arm-chair when she entered, and made his most soldierly bow. He had evidently been informed of the whole circumstance by his wife, and the whole circumstance had found favour in his eyes.

"I hope you are quite well, young lady," said he, holding out a shaky hand. "We are happy to see you here."

The young lady put her hands behind her, and murmured that she was quite well, but declined to shake hands. Mr. Phidias nodded, and turning to his daughter with that admirable smile of a man of the world, said—

"You are perhaps astonished to see me here

at so early an hour, my child; but the fact is, fortune smiles on me. I have quitted the position of menial; I shall henceforth no longer grind the dust. I am up again."

"I am sure, papa, I should be very glad to hear it, if I knew what you meant," said Lizzie.

"My meaning, child, is obvious," said J. F. "A friend of mine, having found my talents in excess of my position, has offered me a post of trust in one of the first houses in London, which I am to occupy in a few days. In the meantime I am glad that you have found a congenial occupation at the house of my worthy brother-in-law. I am not the man to bear a grudge; not I. Launcelot Sutton has been harsh and unjust to me, whereas, as one of the staunch opponents of free trade, he ought to have helped me. But no matter. Be-gone, dull care; thou and I shall never agree. He is behaving well in this matter, and seems disposed to make it up. So shall I. I bear no grudge, and I mean to go back with you, my dear, and shake him by the hand, and say, "Launcelot Sutton, never mind."

"But I shall have to go back at once, papa," said Lizzie, rather bewildered, looking at her mother.

"You can wait a few minutes till I have put on my best coat and hat," said the father. "I have just fetched them from my accommodating


tailor, and they look like new. I shall be with you in five minutes."

"Whatever am I to do, mamma?" said Lizzie, when they were alone.

"Do, child!" said the little mother. "How do you mean? Your uncle will be glad to see papa, I am sure; and so he should."

Lizzie was silent. She felt instinctively that her mother was striving to keep up the good name which had become hers, and she blessed her for it. Nor did J. F. in his best attire look so much out of place. Somehow a new spirit had possessed him latterly, and when his wife gave him the last brush, and put his cravat a tenth part of an inch more to the right, and kissed him, Mr. George Phidias marched wonderfully erect, as if he had got impaled on his own family tree. He looked a little weather-beaten truly, a trifle seedy, but not so much that he might not be taken for a half-pay officer, who had suffered somewhat from hard times. Mr. Sutton, at any rate, was inclined to take that view. He received his brother-in-law kindly, if distantly, and Phidias had sufficient tact to fall into the same tone.

There was a gentleman in the study—a gray-haired man, to whom Maud flew the moment she saw him, with the utmost protestations of delight. It was, of course, dear uncle Plumper, and he must tell her all about her dear sister Katie, and dear



aunt Eugenie; and when she was settled on his knee she could scarcely be got away. The good Vicar, although pleased with his child, had listened to Mr. Phidias with some attention.

"I believe, sir, you mentioned the city of Lyons just now," said he, "as the former place of your abode. May I ask for how long?"

"For about a dozen years, I should say," returned Mr. Phidias, wondering what was coming.

"I was very much interested in a description of some Roman ruins in that city. Do you know anything of them?"

Mr. Phidias happened to know a good deal of them, having lived in an arch which was supposed to be of even more ancient origin. He described it with some minuteness.

"Is it not strange that ages upon ages, and generations after generations, should pass and leave us nothing but this?" cried the Vicar.

"Sir, they have left us everything upon which we base our civilisation," said Mr. Sutton.

"I deny it," exclaimed the Doctor; "our civilisation is based upon the Gospel, and that is of divine origin."

"My dear David," said Mr. Sutton, "socially speaking, it is our endeavour to emulate the prowess of our ancestors and their independence, as it was their endeavour to emulate that of the ancient Romans and Greeks. Do you think these Romans

were not stimulated by the glorious traditions of their ancestors, or that their laws, which are our models, should not have assumed their shape gradually in the brains of patrician families through ages?"

"I think not, brother," said Mr. Phidias. "We are no longer anxious to emulate our forefathers. No, sir. We bowl over whatever we can; we abolish and pull down; and we make laws that our forefathers would have been ashamed to have dreamed of. Do you think, sir, your patricians would ever have thought of free trade?"

"I think the agrarian laws were infinitely bolder," said Mr. Sutton. "Had [free trade been possible then it would have been proposed."

"Free trade is possible everywhere and under all conditions," said the Vicar; "but it belongs to the Eternal Why, which we cannot hope to solve here, that the readjustment of taxation should always occasion so much ill-will."

"That is obvious enough, sir," cried Phidias, "because the adjusters insist upon disregarding whom they bowl over."

"Then it is only more wonderful," said the Vicar, rising, "that in a readjustment which is evidently necessary it should be inevitable to bowl any one over. I am sorry to break off this conversation; but I have a few calls to make."

As it happened, Mr. Phidias had also risen, and

was himself leaving. He had felt his spirits rising in the company of gentlemen—he had been treated as one of their equals. A glimpse of his youthful manhood, of his better self, came before him, and he determined, now that he had the chance, to remain in the company of the Vicar as long as he could. Dr. Plumper said he was going towards the Park. Mr. Phidias said he was also going towards the Park; and so they continued their way together. Mr. Phidias was never at a loss for words.

“I apprehend, sir, that you are an upholder of that great measure, and I have no disposition to find fault with you. I only wish I could convince you with what rapid strides the country would have progressed, had it never been passed.”

“Have you ever reflected, sir,” replied the Vicar, as they turned into Park Lane, “what an exalted position this country might have occupied if King John had never signed the Magna Charta?”

“No, sir,” said Mr. Phidias, flourishing his stick; “I do not believe our position would have been as good.”

“What!” exclaimed the Vicar, with a concealed smile; “picture to yourself the state of England, if after half-a-dozen such incompetent princes ruling without control, the royal office had been abolished in this country. We should have had a Republic for four hundred years, sir, and we should have been the most glorious, the most

prosperous, the most self-denying race under the sun."

"Never, sir," replied Mr. Phidias, flourishing his stick with some vehemence; "I don't believe it."

"Take care, you clumsy clown," cried a sharp voice beside them, as the foot passengers rushed away in all directions. A couple of horsemen were coming through the Park gate at that moment. They were both mounted on splendid animals, which became frightened by the flourish of Mr. Phidias's stick. The one rider, a young one, checked his horse forcibly, and controlled it. The other, who had been taken unawares, endeavoured to pacify his spirited horse; but the noise frightened it more and more. It began to plunge and lash out, and, suddenly taking a violent jump, threw its rider.

The people rushed towards the fallen man, and, among them, the Vicar.

"Gracious Heaven!" he exclaimed, as he saw the fall, "it is Lord Ryan!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

LADY UNDERDOWN'S PARTY.

SIR MARMADUKE UNDERDOWN rose one forenoon—for Sir Marmaduke seldom rose in the morning—to find himself and his house famous. The baronet was a wealthy man, and he considered it his duty to spend his money wealthily; yet all his spending had up to that period brought him no fame, and but little gratification. The Underdown family tree was of such dimensions as to make one pause; and the history of the race, he was wont to say, comprised the most interesting portion of the annals of the kingdom. But although the Underdown family tree was the type of the British oak, and the Underdown dining-room table the type of the British mahogany, Sir Marmaduke had been unable, notwithstanding his constant endeavours, to keep up with ancestral glory.

One of the traditions of the family was that the Underdowns should only give two great dinners and two great evening parties during the season,

but on those occasions fashionable London was to be put completely under the shade of the great tree. Sir Marmaduke had a lively recollection of the brilliant *éclat* that had attended the entertainments given at the great town mansion by his mother in years past. He succeeded to the title somewhat late in life, but when his season came, he forthwith organised the same brilliant display. Alas, poor man! He forgot that the old baronet had been a bosom friend of the Regent, and a representative of bygone splendour. People had crowded to his father's rooms to hear old wits, and listen to old scandal; but they stopped away from the son's house because the new wits went elsewhere, and the new scandal was insipid. Lady Underdown was disappointed and sorrowful. When she consented to reign in Sir Marmaduke's bosom, she had considered his position a brilliant one in society, and she was slow in perceiving its gradual decline. But there was a moment when it became too plain, that their evening parties, though eminently respectable, were no longer events. In vain she manœuvred to get a glowing account in the "Weathercock." It looked meagre by the side of the plain list of guests which had been brought together by her brother, Lord Ryan, and his simple wife.

Lady Underdown had felt that a change of tactics was necessary, but her husband turned

a deaf ear to her remonstrances for many years. What had produced success in his father's time, must produce success now; and so Sir Marmaduke had sailed out season after season, with his old-fashioned fleet of full-rigged, wooden line-of-battle ships, refusing to see that the shoal of taper-prowed corvettes and sloops, which puffed and screwed and steamed past him, the tiny gunboats that could have hung from his davits or gone into his hold, were of quite as much importance now-a-days as the stately monitors whom he desired to salute. At last, when Eugenie was to be brought out, and the feud between the two sisters had been healed, Lady Underdown took counsel with Mrs. Charles, whose husband being admitted as an acute lawyer, pointed out, with his wonted keenness, the old-fashioned mistakes.

"What!" cried Sir Marmaduke, "these principles were good enough to enable my father to assemble the wealth, the wit, and the virtue of the metropolis—and why should they not be good enough now?"

Charles Overdon, knowing this to be the traditional family principle, and therefore entitled to respect, smiled with due and grave decorum.

"You are quite right," said he, "only now-a-days these qualities seldom go together. What you have to do is to hunt them up separately, and let them meet here. And, if I might suggest


something, you should be very careful to add a fourth, which is equally highly prized, and that is, beauty."

Sir Marmaduke, who dimly understood the meaning, growled out something indefinite, and said he could not.

"It may be that you are right," said he. "If so, I am sorry for all of us. I, for one, don't understand it."

"Let me advise you to consult Lord Ryan," said Charles, with the door in his hand. "If Lady Underdown undertakes the appointments, and Lord Ryan chooses the guests, you may safely expect success."

The unpleasantness of the remark was overlooked for the sake of the advice, and the result was a brilliant success. It was a year of agitation on the Continent. There were rumours of war and revolution; there were whispers of hidden armaments; there were hints of a secret conference at which some powerful combination was to be arranged. Lord Burgos—young though he then was—was known to be in the secret, and his house was narrowly watched. Nobody thought of the old mansion of the Underdowns in St. James's; and it was there that a meeting took place. The terms were definitely arranged, and when the combination startled Europe Sir Marmaduke had the secret and intense gratification to find his house and evening



party connected with so important an event. With one leap the house had regained its position. The baronet was converted. He studied modern construction, and abandoned his brave old hearts of oak without regret. From that day Lady Underdown's parties once more became events, at which not to have been crushed, and trampled on, and put out of temper, was an approach to social extinction.

The evening before Lord Ryan's accident had been fixed for one of these great assemblies, and, although Eugenie had wished for social extinction, she knew that she was expected to be there, and that escape was impossible. Just out of the hands of her maid, she was standing in the drawing-room when Lord Ryan entered. He looked at her long and fondly, but it seemed to him for a moment that her face wore a somewhat cold and hard expression.

"The few days at Beecham seem to have done you good, child," said he, kissing her. "You are well?"

"Better than either of us will be to-morrow," said she, languidly, "have you prepared yourself for a nine hours' battle?"

"No, indeed!" said he, "I shall not stop a minute after two o'clock. And we will leave before that if you like."

"We could not possibly leave earlier," said

she, "for we should offend my aunt. And it does not very much matter, after all, for it will be the last night. Are you quite ready to go on Wednesday evening?"

"I have made all my arrangements with the Doctor. Is your friend Mrs. Bell to join us in London?"

"We thought it better for her to go from Bircham to Dover direct, and meet us there," answered Eugenie, holding out her gloved hand for him to button. "She prefers it, and there is no necessity for her coming to London."

Lord Ryan took the little hand and fastened the buttons. As he did so, he felt a slight tremor pass through her, and glanced up at her face. It was calm and tranquil; but it was still pale and not joyful. Lord Ryan sighed, and led her to the sofa. She resisted for a moment.

"We shall be late; the carriage has been waiting half-an-hour."

"Let it wait!" said he curtly, motioning the maid to go. Then looking at her with tenderness, he said. "My dear child, is there nothing that will drive this cloud away? This trip to Italy and the East, I thought, would bring back the roses and smiles, but it has not. There is something, Eugie——"

"Indeed, my dear father, you are mistaken,"

said she with a smile, as bright as it was brief. "There is absolutely nothing. I am only a little tired, and this east wind is so chilling. I am so delighted to go."

"Eugie," said he gravely, and tenderly, "you know that I have no thought on earth but you. Can you not confide in me? It has pleased God to take my dear Eleanor away, and I know that I cannot be to you as a mother—but at least I can sympathise and advise. If there is anything in the world I can do, child——"

"Why, my dear father, you are very melancholy to-day," said she, averting her head to brush away a tear. "It is not to be supposed that I should always be smiling. Nobody can be that, not even you."

"No," said he, "but I could at twenty-three. Eugie—listen to me a moment. I have had serious misgivings of late—not alarming—mere thoughts, but you know I am past fifty, and very few of my family have ever reached sixty. They may be idle dreams, but once or twice I have thought, if I could see my dear girl safely in the hands of some strong, noble, and loving protector, these forebodings would not trouble me so much. Can it not be?"

"That may be tried once, papa," said she, shaking her head, "but not again. Do you know any one who is good, great, and generous?"

"You will meet many men to-night, who have these qualities in some degree; and if you do not look for perfection, you will find that you get very near it. There is such a thing as giving yourself up to ideals that can never be realized. I did so at one time, and had to give them up, and found myself happier."

She grasped her fan firmly and bit her lip, during those words. Now, looking straight before her, she said in a low voice,

"Did you not love some one else, whom you could not get, before you married my mother?"

"I did," answered Lord Ryan. "And I might have been unhappy for life, had I not faced the danger. When I married Eleanor I was not in love with her. Three months afterwards, I found what a treasure I had gained, and I have loved more deeply than most men. Yet I married her solely because she was good, intelligent, and beautiful; I found greater happiness than I dared to hope—and you may find the same. If you wait for an ideal you may wait long."

"I think you are right," said she, slowly; "I might wait very long. I shall make a choice when we return."

"I have had a request from somebody to be permitted to join us at Rome," said Lord Ryan.

"It is Lord Burgos," said she, "I know it, for he hinted at something of the same kind to me. I shall see."

They rose, and went down to the carriage in silence. At the door she paused suddenly.

"This tour of ours has been delayed so long, I am almost afraid something will interfere. We must go at once. If we start on Wednesday, and leave England behind us, I feel inclined to say, yes."

"I shall take care we leave no later," said Lord Ryan, pressing her hand. "My arrangements are all made."

When Eugenie entered the house of festivity, she created quite a little stir. She was now in the full ripeness of her beauty and youth, and she looked animated and interesting. There was about her brilliancy something that repelled instead of attracting the ordinary butterfly; but it possessed a strange and powerful fascination for men of thought and action. There was undeniably a glow of enjoyment in her eyes as she received the homage of those with whose names the world was familiar; as a woman she could not help being flattered and pleased.

Yet as the evening wore on, and she came to think what these men had said and thought, she felt oppressed by the dreadful monotony of egotism that peeped out from under their best

sayings. She wandered back to that evening at the Cottage, when her uncle had explained to her that self-interest was the creed of this world. Slowly, but surely, the truth, the dreadful truth was over-casting her soul. Was there no escape from it? Was it not perhaps better to fly from the world and enter some secluded convent? These thoughts flew through her brain while conversing with a great prelate of the church of Rome. He was a man of much conversational power, and of extraordinary ability; and she had been charmed by the manner in which he unfolded to her the details of a scheme which it was his mission to introduce into England, and the simplicity of which it took him half-an-hour to explain.

"Do you know, Monsignor," said Eugenie, "that I sometimes have a great desire to withdraw from the world?"

"We all have that desire occasionally," replied the prelate, fixing his dark eyes upon her, "but it is not good for all."

"But for me it might be," said Eugenie. "I feel that I could fly from the world, and devote my life henceforth to prayers and solitude."

"A woman of your talents can do her Master's work better abroad, Mrs. Fairfax," said the priest impressively. "You have received remarkable gifts, and it is your duty to use them in this world to further His glory. If you were to throw

yourself into some great work, I am convinced the success of it would bring you that happiness which you yearn for in vain."

"A great work?" asked she. "Of what kind? Such as yours, for instance?"

"Mine is undoubtedly a great work," answered he. "And if I could hope to gain your help——"

Eugenie was silent. This was either a great or a deep scheme. She determined to know more about it.

"Your plan, as far as I can judge, Monsignor, might enlist my sympathies deeply," replied she earnestly. "Yet before I promise any support, I would fain know whether its success will at all contribute to place its chief promoter before the world, the English world especially, in a position and rank befitting his great qualities."

"I scarcely understand you perfectly," said the cautious Father in God, with a smile. "Be more explicit, and I may answer you."

"I will speak without reserve," said Eugenie, feeling with secret malice that her prey was nibbling at the bait. "There are many of us, many whom I could point out in this room, and whom I daresay you know, who think that the time has come for asserting once more in this country, the absolute independence of the Church. The Church of England, as you know, is completely under the direction of politicians, the chief of whom

you see in yonder corner, and who believes in nothing. You must know very well that a new and great movement is going on around us, that many who now secretly sympathise would openly acknowledge a great leader, if he were not only great, but high. That leader, Monsignor, is no other than you. Humility may, perhaps, prevent you from seeing it, but others do. Have you no hope to gain that high position?"

"It is not in my power to predict events," said the prelate, elevating his eyes to the chandelier. "My position is already one of great responsibility."

"But not high enough for aristocratic England. Be frank. You have asked me to assist you. I could devote my life to a noble work, but is there any hope that success will bring you the scarlet hat?"

She looked for a moment into his brilliant and restless eyes; and, although he was silent, she read in them what he could not admit.

"And once a cardinal," continued Eugenie, with animation, "and a leader of a great and powerful revival in these isles, while Germany is hostile, Austria indifferent, France sceptical, and neither Italy nor Spain enthusiastic, your way to the apostolic chair itself is indicated by a lofty and just ambition. Think of it! An Englishman in Rome!" said she enthusiastically.

A faint blush had overspread the severe counte-



nance of the prelate. This strange and fascinating woman was laying before him his dearest and most secret hopes and aspirations. He glanced at her with admiration.

"And will you promise to help us?" said he. "You scarcely know your own influence."

"'Tis but too true," she thought; "self, and self alone." She therefore answered coldly,

"I will consider." "By-the-bye, you know my uncle Overdon, the member for Thamestone? Let me make you acquainted."

The lawyer came very opportunely at that moment, with Mr. Thomas Payne, who implored the fair widow to graciously favour him in the next quadrille. Eugenie declined. She very seldom danced now, and certainly not that night. The prelate entered into conversation with the lawyer, feeling that he had been worsted in the encounter with Eugenie; and she now turned to the popular member with a cruel desire to test him also.

"You must be very thankful to know that the session is nearly over, Mr. Payne. You have been very hard worked."

"And all to no purpose," replied that gentleman, who concluded from the lady's manner that she had something to say. "The principal measure of the year has fallen through."

"But if it appears next year in better form you cannot complain. Indeed, Mr. Payne, I can assure

you that your conduct has been highly appreciated in certain quarters. Although I am my father's daughter, you know that my sympathies are really with the other side; and I have no doubt that at the first change a recognition——”

“The Lord forbid, madam!” exclaimed the popular member. “What I do, I do for duty's sake. Reward is out of the question.”

“I did not say reward, Mr. Payne; I said recognition, which to men of your position is better. This question of the Labour Laws is not easily brought to an issue, but may easily lead to conflict; and every one must appreciate your tact in continuing to support a measure which did not have your sympathies.”

“I don't understand you,” said Mr. Payne, frowning. “What do you mean by the Bill not having my sympathies?”

“A woman's wits, you know, are often quicker,” smiled Eugenie; “and I thought I could detect in your advocacy of the Bill, both in and out of the House, a secret contempt for it. Mind, I don't say for the cause, but for this particular Bill. Frankly, did you not give your vote for it with the hope that the Lords would throw it out? Were you not glad when they did?”

“Mrs. Fairfax, you are putting questions the answering of which may seriously compromise me.”

“Be assured that I will never compromise you,

Mr. Payne; but I will go further. Suppose a great chief, hitherto of no party, but of great name and influence, was organising a party for the purpose of introducing, next year, a measure which will differ in some essential points from this one, and, suppose he had asked me to ascertain privately whether your admiration of the late measure was so complete as to prevent your taking charge of the one he contemplates, what would you say?"

"I should say 'No,'" answered Mr. Payne, after a pause. "There were many things in it that I could not agree with. Nothing in this world is perfect, only it would have been impolitic to condemn them at the time. We were afraid of a dissolution, and I am bound to follow where I cannot lead."

"Just so, Mr. Payne. Having pledged yourself to support some such measure, opposition would have endangered your seat in Parliament."

"Most certainly it would," said he; "the people were so resolved that I could not have opposed it had it been worse."

"And in these days," said she, with a significant smile, "it is not always safe for a politician to speak his convictions."

"He must do as best he can," said Mr. Payne shrugging his shoulders. "I was justified in advocating it to ventilate the subject, though privately

I cannot deny that I did not like it, and calculated on its being thrown out. If the chief you speak of should entrust his Bill to me—that is, if it meets with my approval—I promise you that it won't fall through if I can help it."

"Self, self again," she muttered, and with a touch of sarcasm she said,

"And nobody could have expected you to denounce it in the teeth of both parties, and risk such grave consequences; I am obliged by your candour.—My dear Lady Burgos, I had given up all hopes."

"And I had nearly given up my intention of coming," said the Countess, releasing the arm of Lord Daintry, and sitting down on the couch by her side; "but John made me come, and said you would have been disappointed if we had not met. And so you are going to Italy and Jerusalem, are you?"

"Next Wednesday, I hope," said Eugenie, who noticed a strange pre-occupation in the old lady.

"John pressed me very much to follow you; but I had already promised to go to the Isle of Wight, and I think it is better for him that he should go to Scotland. You know he was educated there, and hot climates don't suit him."

"To Scotland!" repeated Eugenie, wondering why this was said. "I did not know that Lord Burgos was going anywhere."

"My dear, he is of a most fickle and unstable disposition in some things," said his mother; "he makes a plan one day and abandons it the next. He takes a fancy for a week," she added significantly, "and forgets all about it in a fortnight."

"He is no worse in that respect than the rest of men," said Eugenie. "But I would scarcely have thought so."

"There are things which it is a mother's privilege to say, my dear Eugenie," said Lady Burgos cordially; "and you told me one day that you sometimes regarded me in the light of a mother. Let me take that privilege, and hint that if you permit John to join you in Rome you will give him an encouragement which will be unmistakable."

Eugenie was silent, but a slight inclination of her head acknowledged the justice of the remark. She had become interested.

"You are no longer a young and inexperienced girl, so we can speak frankly. I have long loved you with more than affection, and this is a matter of grave importance. Have you considered this step? Have you reflected whether John could make you happy? Although he be my own son, I fear that your sensitive disposition would be hurt at some things that have almost hurt me."

"I have never regarded the matter so closely," muttered Eugenie. "I scarcely know what to say."

"Let me decide for you," said Lady Burgos. "When you see him to-night be somewhat distant, and say that you cannot fix the time when you will be in Rome. If he be really in earnest a few months will make no difference."

"Why, I don't even know that it is settled where we are going," said Eugenie, carelessly. "I am afraid papa can't stand the heat as well as he could, and we may have to go to Norway. What do you advise, Sir John?"

The physician of princes, who was passing at that moment, inclined his snowy head before the ladies, and said he was ready to advise anything.

"We are afraid Lord Ryan can't stand the heat of Italy," said Lady Burgos. "Would it be wise to go there?"

"Not at present, certainly, for anybody," answered Sir John. "You must delay a little, and get there when it is cooler. But I have no fear for Lord Ryan; it is his daughter that we are anxious about."

"What is the matter with me, that you should be anxious?" asked Eugenie, smiling.

"If I had not been present when you took up your abode in this world," answered he, "I would say you were getting old."

"Oh, anything but that, my dear Sir John," laughed Mrs. Fairfax. "Why I would not even say that you were getting old."

"It is the pace that kills," said he, regarding her attentively, "and if those eyes should remain so brilliant, you will soon be much older than your humble servant, though he has passed three score and ten. I once knew a young man at Schönbrunn who must have been nearly fifty constitutionally at his birth. You must have known him, Lady Burgos—I mean the Duc de Reichstadt?"

"Poor fellow! I danced with him once at Vienna," said the ex-ambassadress. "It seemed so odd to think of him and his great father."

"And yet there was something in him occasionally," said the physician, "that was grand. His carriage was very striking, and I always think of it when I see Lord Burgos. There is a something in him that carries me back to Schönbrunn."

The Earl, who advanced towards them at that moment, looked undeniably striking, and even commanding. It was impossible not to notice him even in a crowded room, and many admiring and still more envious glances followed him. Eugenie had seen him for some time in search of them, and she did not feel displeased that he should come and pays his devoirs, who was not given to much gallantry in similar gatherings. He was evidently pleased to find them—his mother evidently annoyed to be found.

"Sir John was just comparing you to the Duc

de Reichstadt, the idiotic son of Napoleon," said she, laughingly.

"Nay, the comparison was only bodily," laughed the physician, "and no man need have been ashamed of the likeness."

"I have seen it," said the Earl, "and I feel flattered. He was noble looking, but a lamentable instance of hereditary genius. Don't you find that a man of great mind, though he may have clever parents, seldom has clever children?"

"If he has any at all," answered the physician, "it is a merciful dispensation of Providence that they should be dull. Think of a race of Napoleons!"

"It would be almost as appalling as a race of Shakespeares," said Eugenie. "It would exhaust the world."

"And yet it is a pity that great races should fall into insignificance," said Lady Burgos. "I think it is merely because they make unsuitable and foolish marriages, and do not think of the future."

"Or because they are generally forced or cajoled into marrying against their inclination," replied the Earl, quietly regarding his mother. Then, turning with a smile to Eugenie, "Are you really leaving on Wednesday? How do you go?"

"It is all unsettled, except that we do leave," returned Mrs. Fairfax. "We are abandoning the plan of Italy and Rome."

"Have you been persuaded so quickly?" said he, frowning and turning pale. "I understood from Lord Ryan——"

"It is precisely for Lord Ryan's sake that we are afraid," said Lady Burgos, looking straight at Sir John. "Eugenie thinks of Norway."

The physician, who was too accustomed to hear himself quoted against himself, and who saw a small plot being played, discreetly turned away without saying a word.

"I understood from Lord Ryan that all his arrangements were made," said the Earl, while a harsh and disagreeable expression passed over his face, "and this alteration in your plans would disappoint me deeply."

"Perhaps Lord Ryan may write to you when our plans are more definite," answered Eugenie, calmly, taking her uncle's arm, who had just ended a discussion with the prelate. "Good bye, dear Lady Burgos. I shall call upon you before we leave town."

"Are you going away? Shall I call the carriage?" said Overdon. "Has my lady become tired?"

"Let me get some fresh air," muttered his niece. "Was it this man whom my father recommended? I cannot believe it!"

"Come out into the conservatory. You will catch cold if you do not wrap yourself up. You are shivering."

"Shivering! I should think so. Did you see that man's face, uncle? Was it not bad? His own mother warned me against him."

"Psha! You don't know Lady Burgos as I do. Are you quite sure what motives she may have had for that?"

"Uncle! How dare you say any such thing? Don't you know that papa once loved her passionately."

"Yes, but I don't think he does now. She is a deep diplomatist, Eugie, and has deep motives. Let me fetch you an ice."

While she was alone at the open window of the conservatory, looking at the starlit sky and wondering at the strange perversity of human nature, and the sad samples she had seen of it within the last hour, she heard some female voices speaking lowly, and mentioning her name. Involuntarily she listened—before she could tear herself away, she had heard enough.

"You are a foolish and headstrong girl," said one voice, evidently the elder. "Do you know that he will be a Duke before the year is over. You shall dance with him—or we go home at once. I insist upon it."

"I don't care!" answered the second voice. "I am not going to be made ridiculous a second time, as with Lord Bonfire. He may be a Duke, but it is plain that he is after Mrs. Fairfax; and

this is only a whim of Lady Burgos. I am not going to move one step in the matter. I have some self-respect left."

"Why, you must be mad," said her mother. "He will go where he is led, and Lady Burgos promised me to get that widow away, and out of his head in a week. She is fond of her in a certain way, but she knows that Mrs. Fairfax had no money from her mother, and Lord Ryan's property they say is small and encumbered. Now, our estate joins Genthorpe; and Lady Burgos confided to me that her son had bought it. So you see——"

The voices passed away. Eugenie remained looking at the sky, and fearing that her eyes would out-burn the stars. This surely was the hardest blow of all. Lady Burgos, the stately Countess, whom alone she had looked upon as a woman to admire and love, to have played with her thus; it was almost beyond belief. She could not encompass it. Some natures are slow to comprehend impurity—and remain charitably credulous to the end; and she had almost resolved to run back and speak openly to her friend, when her uncle returned with the refreshment.

"I shall go mad, if I stop here another minute," said she, suddenly. "Take me to the carriage, and see me home."

"I thought you were not well, and I have

asked your aunt to make your excuses. We can get out this way."

"I am well enough," said she, as the carriage darted away with them, "but I am dead tired of it all."

"Tired of hesitation," said he. "Like every woman, you want to be taken by surprise. Better make up your mind."

"I have!" replied Eugenie, slowly. "I am fully resolved to dismiss the subject until my return!"

"By that time, my dear, let us hope you will have done idealizing. It sometimes pays in politics, but not in marriage. Take people as they are. And they are not so very bad, if you understand the principle."

"Oh, yes!" sighed the youthful widow bitterly. "I am learning your lesson very fast. I am beginning to admire your natural principle."

END OF VOL. II.





